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## Shooting the Pacific War: Marine Corps Combat Photography in WWII

Thayer Soule

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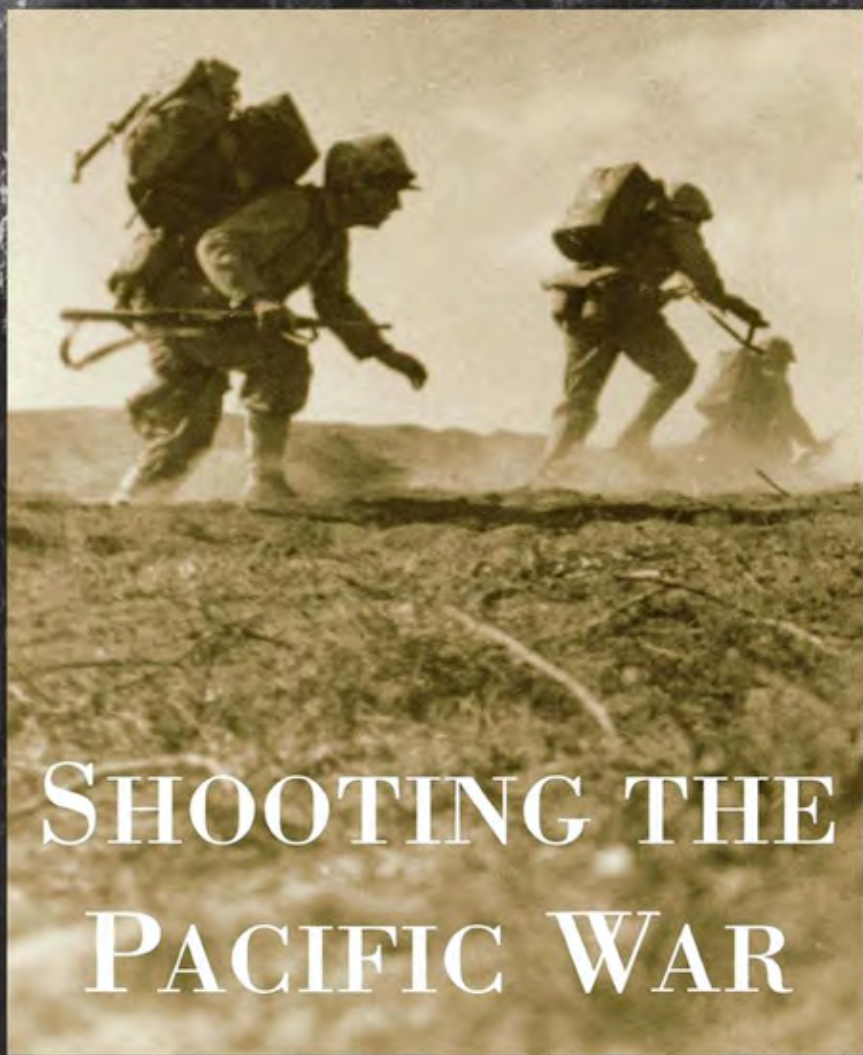
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# SHOOTING THE PACIFIC WAR

*Marine Corps Combat Photography in WWII*

THAYER SOULE



Shooting  
the  
Pacific War





# Shooting the Pacific War

*Marine Corps  
Combat Photography  
in WWII*

Thayer Soule

Lt. Col. U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, Ret.

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(Photo by Richard Handley)

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*To Chuck, Dick, Grant, and Joe*

*We went through hell together.  
You helped pull me through.*



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## *Preface*

Someone has said that gentlemen prefer wars. War is devastation beyond belief, horror beyond imagination. Yet it produces a vitality, a comradeship that is found at no other time.

This book is a record of my part in World War II. It is drawn from memory and from my detailed personal notes and journals of the time. Originally, I did not intend that it be read by the general public.

As I read other books about the Pacific war, I found that nearly all of them were by or about generals or admirals, privates or corporals. My view, as a Marine captain, was from a place somewhere between. These are my personal experiences and opinions, the latter not always those of “The Management.” The people are real, and I have used their actual names. Ranks and titles are those of the time during which the events took place. Dates and hours are written Navy-style.

*Writing a book is an adventure. To begin with, it is a toy, an amusement. Then it becomes a mistress. Then it becomes a tyrant. The last phase is when you are about to be reconciled to your servitude. You kill the monster.*

—Sir Winston Churchill

Chris Merillat, author of two books about Guadalcanal, gave me invaluable guidance on the details of the campaign, both at the time and later. Don Morse prodded me into more concise writing. Members of the Writers Groups of Sun City West, Arizona, endured long readings of the material, and were unfailing in their interest and constructive comments. My wife, Ruth, devoted many hours to detailed, frank criticism, and encouraged me during the long production process. Christine Clough, my copy editor, was immensely helpful—and patient.



# 1

## *I Become a Marine*

On 7 August 1942, aboard *Hunter Liggett*, general quarters awakened us at 0430. Outside, it was dark and cool. Guadalcanal was on our right. Savo Island, black and mysterious, was on our left. A curtain of mist was rising on the greatest spectacle the Solomon Islands would ever see.

By 0600 we were off Lunga Point. At least, the Australian planters who were with us said that it was Lunga Point. It didn't look the way we expected it to look. At 0615 *Quincy's* eight-inch guns fired a crashing salvo. The shells streaked in long, luminous arcs across the sky into the coconut groves. There was no return fire. Other ships joined in the bombardment until, between the ships' guns and the explosions on shore, the roar was continuous. It carried like thunder over the water. Even at our distance we felt the punch and power. By now the enemy must be at least awake!

Off Red Beach, the transports swung toward shore. We on *Hunter Liggett* were part of the support group. While waiting for orders, we marveled at the fireworks. *Barnett* and *McCawley* were closest to shore. The first wave of assault troops climbed over the side and down into the landing boats. The bombardment continued. Now and then, when a salvo fell short, blue geysers of water shot up. Shells bursting on the beach produced bright orange flashes amid clouds of sand and smoke. *Canberra* poured several salvos into the coconuts, and was rewarded with a big column of black smoke. Destroyers swept back and forth along the coast, firing constantly. Their gun reports were sharp and crackly, not the deep, powerful booms of the cruisers. From Tulagi, twenty miles away, we heard the gunfire of other ships. There, too, the attack had begun.

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At 0910 the first wave started for shore. At 0930 a white star-cluster shot into the air and hung for a moment over the beach. Two battalions had landed safely. The First Marines followed with the Tank Battalion and some artillery units. By 1000 scores of landing craft were running back and forth. The beaches were even better than anticipated, with no offshore coral.

At 1100 we received warning of an air raid. The ships upped anchor and began to circle in the bay. At 1300 destroyers near Savo put up anti-aircraft fire. The sky filled with the black puffs of their shells. Visibility was poor. We learned later that there were fifty-three planes, but we saw only three or four. Their bombs scored no hits. After returning close to shore, the ships resumed unloading.

Men in the landing boats reported that the situation on the beach was poor. The Pioneer Battalion, the only unit available to work cargo, couldn't keep up with the flood of materiel. Boats were forced to land farther and farther to the right. Many were waiting as long as an hour to be unloaded. At 1330, when the ships pulled out into the bay in anticipation of another air raid, shore parties had a chance to move some supplies inland.

The raid, nine dive-bombers flying low, arrived at 1500. Two or three of the dive-bombers broke through our fighter patrol and anti-aircraft fire to strike the destroyer screen. One ship was damaged. All of the planes were shot down, or had to ditch.

By 1600, our assault troops and most of their support units were ashore, but we on *Hunter Liggett* were still awaiting orders to disembark. Unloading continued at a furious pace. By 0300 on 8 August, the beach was so congested that work stopped, to be resumed at first light.

At 1100 on 8 August, we received warning that a large force of planes would hit us in thirty minutes. We were having Sunday dinner when general quarters sounded. The mess men dropped two platters of roast chicken on the deck, and took off for their battle stations. Each of us grabbed a piece of chicken as we headed out the door. As the ships circled, *Alchiba* was directly behind us with two thousand tons of ammunition still on board, a fact that did not contribute to our peace of mind. At 1145, the eastern screening force began anti-aircraft fire. A lookout shouted, "There they are, very low! Look down—down!"

The planes were on the far side of the bay, just above the water. As they attacked, spouts of water erupted around our ships. Explosions and the rattle of the 20mm guns pounded our ears. Another wave of planes swooped onto the transports. As they passed *Elliott*, one bomber burst into flames and crashed onto her deck.

Three planes tried to go between us and *McCawley*, less than a thousand yards away. They were so low that our guns on the boat deck fired down at them. We could see the pilots' faces. Some men fired at them with pistols. All three planes exploded in midair. Burning debris fell around us, sending up clouds of black smoke. The fire on *Elliott* was out of control. She was the only damaged ship, but those who saw the attack from shore thought at least six had been hit. The Japanese later claimed to have sunk ten transports. This was not surprising in view of the amount of smoke, but nearly all of it came from burning Japanese planes. Of the forty-two that attacked, twenty-six were shot down by our fighters before they reached the transports. Most of the remaining sixteen were destroyed by the ships' guns.

As evening came, we received word that a powerful Japanese naval force would probably reach Guadalcanal about 0600 the next day. Screening forces were deployed at the western end of the bay. Unloading was accelerated. *Elliott*, now near Florida Island and still burning, lit up the bay so dangerously that one of our destroyers sank her.

It began to rain about 2000. Most of us went to bed. At 0200 we were awakened by general quarters. The Japanese had arrived early. The sky near Savo was ablaze with orange and white flashes. Tremendous explosions shook our ship. After only a few minutes, the firing stopped. We could hear only the rain falling on the canvas overhead. As our ship moved out into the bay, Coast Guard captain Lewis W. Perkins, skipper of the ship, leaned on the front rail of the bridge and peered into the darkness. A plane circled overhead. Suddenly, a flare illuminated the bay. Its searing light revealed the transports and destroyers, grotesquely naked. On the horizon, firing began again.

"Hold on," cried Perkins. "If we're going to get it, this is it!"

We stood breathless, gripping the rail. The shells, if they were coming, were on the way. The white light glared down on us. Our



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ships just sat there: fat, stupid ducks in the blinding glare. We listened, and counted the seconds. The guns roared again, but they were far away and not firing at us. Captain Perkins took a long, deep breath. “Well,” he said, “this just isn’t our time to go.”

The flare died out. We floated warm and secure in a friendly cloak of darkness. The gunfire died off to the northwest. Except for the glow of a burning ship, the night was black once more.

That naval battle, soon to be known as the Battle of Savo Island, was disastrous. Though we Marines didn’t know until weeks later, the Japanese had sunk the cruisers *Astoria*, *Vincennes*, *Quincy*, and *Canberra*. Other ships were badly damaged. A thousand sailors died. The Japanese, with only minor damage, retired to the northwest. They could have crushed our landing, marooned our troops, destroyed our supplies, and crippled our navy for months to come. But they sailed away. By a daring maneuver and skilled night fighting, they had won the chance to deal a mortal blow—but they sailed away. Years later, we learned that Admiral Mikawa had felt that he had won a great victory. He had. But fearing that our carrier planes would hit him at first light, he retired.

At 1030 on 9 August, because of heavy losses in the naval battle, our transports were ordered to disembark their troops and retire to the south. My comrades and I had started down the ladder into a landing boat when an air alert sounded. The officer of the deck ordered us back, but we knew it was then or never. We “didn’t hear” and went on down into the boat. Half an hour later, all of the ships withdrew. We were on our own. Our equipment and supplies, meager at best, were only 30 percent unloaded.

Our landing boat ground against the sand of Guadalcanal, and I jumped ashore. Red Beach defied description. Crates and boxes were piled high for almost a mile. Many, too near the water, were partially submerged at high tide. Worst of all, the place was deserted. Supplies for the whole division, life and death in equipment, ammunition, and food, were inviting destruction from sea or air, and nothing was being done.

Half a mile from where I landed, I found two of my motion picture cameramen hauling boxes on a work detail. They had been assigned to it immediately upon landing. With no one to counter-

mand the order, they had worked for two days while opportunities for historic films slipped away. I pulled them off the detail and got them going with their cameras. But it was two days late. The damage had been done: We had no pictures of the actual landing.

Lunch was canned apples, crackers, and jam—all Japanese!—not bad for a first meal on Guadalcanal. Afterward, hitching a ride on a passing truck, the two cameramen and I bounced along the beach, crossing flimsy bridges and wallowing through muddy creek bottoms, to just west of the Tenaru River. (Actually, this was Alligator Creek, but it was improperly labeled on our maps. Throughout the campaign we called it the Tenaru River.) There we found the CP (command post): a tent for the general, a lean-to for the Intelligence Section, and three jeeps. That was all. We flopped down in the tall, cool grass.

As I looked up at the palms, I drifted back to August 1939, when the war began for me. I was in Holland, producing a travelogue with VanWormer Walsh for the great world traveler Burton Holmes. We had seen hundreds of men in uniform. That was nothing new in Europe that summer, nor were the town meetings, or the knots of men talking in village squares. But now, on the big New Dike, our way was blocked by a double line of tank traps, guarded by anti-aircraft and machine guns. The world grew suddenly dark, but only for a moment. We drove around the barrier and, under a warm sky, were still able to think of other things.

A few days later, at Zwolle, only forty miles from the German border, large, freshly poured concrete blocks barricaded a bridge. At our hotel, twenty soldiers slept on the porch, and three heavy machine guns bristled on the roof. Large official notices covered the walls, calling up reserves. Doom and foreboding pervaded everything.

On 25 August, troop trains rolled east all day. Barbed wire, bright and new, ran for miles across the countryside. Fields were pitted with gun emplacements. Every bridge was barricaded and guarded. On the road, we were stopped several times for passport inspection. Americans were ordered to report to the nearest consulate. We did so by phone to Rotterdam.

Quiet settled over Holland, and for two days things were deceptively normal. At Berg-en-Dal, we were only yards from the German

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border. Was there barbed wire there too? Were there soldiers, tanks, guns? I walked to a low fence with a wooden gate. Beyond was Germany. A light breeze rustled the trees. Sheep grazed nearby, but not a person was in sight—no wall, no barricade. On my left was a concrete boundary marker, and a line of blazed trees through the forest. I stepped across. The air was just as sweet, the quiet unbroken. I walked through the trees, past the sheep and a red barn. No fort, no sentry, no challenge. The air was hot with sun. I stepped back to my side of the fence, the side chosen for me generations before.

On 28 August, general mobilization was ordered. In minutes, the hotel staff were off to predetermined posts. We set out on dirt roads paralleling the border. In some places, mounds of earth blocked our way. Every town was filled with troops. In Maastricht, we could buy no gasoline, and were told that our car might be commandeered. Trains were not running, and the frontiers were closed. It was time to head for home.

Everyone on the road was hurrying—no panic, just uneasy movement. Driving was difficult because all road signs had been removed. Names of villages had been obliterated, and people refused to give directions. We headed for the coast, but we knew that we would find no safety even there if the fury was unleashed. A thunderstorm was about to break. Low clouds reflected an eerie light. On the railroad beside us, the shrill whistle of a troop train shrieked in the coming night.

Rotterdam was jammed with Americans trying to get home. One man had come by taxi from the German border. A ship leaving for America was sold out. There was nothing to do but wait.

On 1 September, Germany took Danzig, bombed towns in the Corridor, and invaded Poland. On 2 September, France joined England in demanding that Hitler withdraw. Holland held its breath, unable to control events but certain to be involved in whatever happened. We spent 3 September huddled around a radio, desperate for any snatch of news. When war was declared, King George VI spoke on the BBC from London. As the band played “God Save the King,” we all stood up. Minutes later, soldiers began digging air-raid shelters in the park across the street.

On 4 September, Van and I secured space on the steamer

*Statendam*, to sail that night. Our berths were on E deck, below the waterline, in what some called “torpedo junction.” Loading was finished by midnight, but we didn’t sail. The ship was waiting for a special boat train to arrive from Paris. The crew was threatening to strike, so we might not sail at all. As usual in such cases, no one was sure of anything. I went to bed.

At 1030 the next morning the train arrived, and we sailed shortly afterward, minus forty of the crew who refused to go. Rounding Hoek van Holland, we headed out into the Channel with an English pilot who knew the minefields. At 1800, in a calm gray sea under a cold gray sky, we anchored near a lightship. No one knew where we were or why or for how long we had stopped. The ship’s exterior lights went out.

The windows of the bar were covered, and a few drinks were available. We spent the evening there, talking in whispers as though someone might overhear us. Some said that we were at the mouth of the Thames River; others, that we were off Southampton. Some thought that we had stopped because it was dangerous to proceed through the minefields at night. A few passengers slept on deck wearing life jackets. I went below, where it was warm and comfortable.

At 0500 the ship’s engines throbbed to life, and by 0900 we were off Dover. All morning we followed the English coast, the English pilot still on board. At 1500 we passed through the submarine net into Southampton harbor. Planes roared overhead only a few feet above our funnels. Eleven blimps, part of the air defense, were tethered over the city. Two tenders brought out three hundred passengers, and by 1800 we were under way again.

With all lights burning, we headed south. The German and English governments had been notified of our course. Both sides of the ship were brightly lit, its name painted in huge letters, along with two painted Dutch flags. At 2200, we heard gunfire off to starboard, and searchlights cut the night. Then it was dark again.

Next morning the sun was on our left. We were headed south. At 1500 we picked up thirty-seven men in two lifeboats, the entire crew of *Winkleigh*, a torpedoed British freighter. At dawn that morning a German submarine had surfaced and fired a shot across their bow. The freighter stopped, a boat was lowered, and the captain went

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aboard the sub. The commander gave the captain half an hour to abandon ship. An SOS was sent, and replies came from several nearby ships. With that, the crew got into the lifeboats, carrying with them a little baggage. The U-boat crew provided whiskey, bread, water, and cigarettes. The war was still young. The submarine fired one torpedo, sending the freighter to the bottom. Six hours later, in warm weather and a calm sea, we made the rescue.

I had one roll of professional 35mm movie film left. It would last only ninety seconds, but it would have to do. As the men came aboard, they were warm and dry but haggard. They spoke to no one. When we reached New York, the newsreels bought the footage and used it uncut.

By nightfall, news of action in the area was on the radio. Four ships, all British, had been sunk. The final word was that the U-boat had been sunk.

The rest of our journey was uneventful. From a point three hundred miles south of Land's End in England, we went northwest to Cape Race in Newfoundland, then south, within sight of the coast, to New York. The last two days, American warships circled us, and planes flew overhead. We had left Europe and the war behind.

With spring, we lost our air of detachment. Hitler's armies smashed into Norway and Denmark and, a few weeks later, into Holland, Belgium, and France. Western Europe crumbled. By midsummer of 1940, Selective Service was the topic of the day. By 1941, it was law. Then came registration, the drawing from a goldfish bowl, and long lists of numbers read on the radio. When it was over, I was well down the roster but definitely in line for induction. While casting about for a way to use my photographic experience, I found that the Army Air Corps had an aerial photography course at Lowry Field in Denver. I applied in June 1941.

Now began a curious chain of events that would affect my whole life. On 27 October, Julien Bryan, a distinguished documentary producer whom I had known for several years and for whom I had done some work, came to Rochester to present a lecture. I felt a sudden, irresistible urge to meet him at the railroad station. I had no connection with his program. I didn't even know which train he would be on. I knew only that I had to meet him. The Empire State Express

seemed most likely to fit his schedule. I drove downtown and reached the platform as he stepped off the train. He was early for his engagement, so he invited me to his room at the hotel.

Conversation turned to the war and to my plans. The draft, I told him, was far away for me, but I had applied to the Army Air Corps. That was months ago, and nothing had happened. Julien leaned back on the bed and looked me straight in the eye.

“Thayer,” he said, “how would you like to be in the Marines?”

I had already tried twice to enlist in the Marines, but had been turned down because of my faulty color perception. Of course I’d like it, if it were possible.

“They have a Photo Section,” he said. “It’s brand new, and they need men like you. Are you really interested?”

“Of course!”

“OK,” said Julien. “How interested? Would you accept a commission if they offered you one?”

“A commission? My God, of course I would.”

“No backing out, you’re serious?”

“Absolutely.”

“All right. Here we go.”

He reached for the phone, and asked for long distance, Quantico, Virginia, the Marine base just south of Washington, D.C. My heart was pounding so hard that I could hardly hear him ask for Capt. Wallace Nelson, officer-in-charge of the Photo Section.

“Wally, this is Julien. I’m sitting here in Rochester, New York, with a friend of mine, Thayer Soule. I’ve known him for years, and he’s just the kind of guy you need. A college graduate—Harvard, no less. Been all over the world, and he’s a whiz in photography. He’s done some good work for me. He has applied to the Army Air Corps, but I think if you act fast you might be able to get him. Are you interested?”

My mind raced wildly as the conversation continued. Then it was Julien again, talking to me: “When can you be in Quantico?”

It was afternoon. Today was out of the question. It was too far for one day’s drive. “How about day after tomorrow?”

“Wally, he’ll be down day after tomorrow. Yes, the twenty-ninth.”

Julien put down the phone and turned to me. “You’re in,” he

said. "Now, for Pete's sake, don't back out. You've got me way out on a limb."

I'll never know what happened the rest of that day. My head was in the clouds. The Army Air Corps had waited three months to answer my first letter. Three more months had passed since I had filed my application. Here, in three minutes, I had been catapulted into the Marine Corps by telephone.

The twenty-eighth was warm and clear. Driving south, I stopped in Harrisburg for the night, and arrived in Quantico the next afternoon. On U.S. Highway 1, a large sign welcomed me. A road wound for three miles through well-kept grounds, then rounded a corner and came to a sentry box. Beyond was a broad avenue lined with fine brick buildings. Elm trees, their leaves brilliant with autumn, were caught in the backlight of the sun. I felt that I had been there before, that somehow the place was already part of me, or rather, that I was part of it.

I had thought that I had no idea of military life, but now I realized that I did. Somewhere in the back of my mind was a picture of pup tents like the ones we used in the Boy Scouts—miles of them—pup tents and rain and uniforms. This was a city of permanent buildings, shaded walks, and neat grounds.

The sentry gave me a pass, and I drove to the Marine Corps Schools building, a new brick structure facing a large parade ground. Captain Nelson was tall, quiet, and mild-mannered, not at all my idea of a Marine Corps officer. We talked for half an hour about my background, training, and travels, then I had dinner with his family at his home. I was riding a magic carpet. Matters seemed settled, but we were going to go to the very top.

The next morning we drove to Headquarters Marine Corps in the Navy Annex at Arlington. Captain Nelson received a snappy salute as we entered the grounds, and another as we entered the building. To my surprise, nearly everyone was in civilian clothes. At the rear of a large room, behind a glass partition, was the office of Brig. Gen. Robert L. Denig, director of public relations. Captain Nelson stopped at the open door and rapped on the frame. I looked over his shoulder.

In the center of the private office was a large desk and, behind



it, a newspaper opened wide, held by two chubby hands. A cloud of smoke rose behind the paper.

“Stop,” roared a voice from beneath the smoke. “I’m reading about rape!”

In a moment the paper lowered, and there was General Denig, a genial officer of the old school, stout, gray-haired, with a twinkle in his eye. Our talk was brief but to the point. If the captain was satisfied, so was he. How old was I?

“Twenty-four, sir.”

“Any previous military training?”

“No, sir.”

“Well, we won’t worry about that. I’ll need some records. Let’s see what we have to get.” Turning to the intercom on his desk, he pressed a key.

“Yes, sir,” said the box.

“I want the file on I.D. Thomason. I.D. . . . No, D. . . . D., as in damn.”

“That’ll give us the dope,” he chortled. “His case is like yours. I. . . . Oh damn, not again!”

Just outside the window, in Arlington National Cemetery, a funeral procession had arrived. The firing party stood by. “How can we get any work done with *that* all the time?” demanded the general hotly, pointing out the window. “Every day, sometimes twice a day. We have to stop everything!”

The shots rang out, and the soft notes of taps floated on the warm fall air. General Denig stood by his desk, staring out the window. When the music stopped, he slumped into his chair. “Well,” he said, “it can’t go on much longer. The cemetery’s almost full. Now, let’s see, Wally. We have to get this man squared away.”

While running through the papers in the Thomason file, he jotted down a list and handed it to me. “Get these together, Soule, and send them here to me.” He rose, and we walked to the door.

“Well, I guess I can say Lieutenant now,” he chuckled. “Get on this right away. If you hear anything from the Air Corps, just stall ‘em.”

In Harrisburg that night, I bought a handbook for military officers and read until the small hours. It opened up a whole world of

terms and phrases, so much to learn. The next day, I was home. I got my papers together and on 7 November put them in the mail.

I was home at my desk when the news came—Not that news! Something far bigger! I had almost finished editing a film for Julien Bryan. A radio played softly at my side. Outdoors, it was wet and dark, late afternoon in dull December. The New York Philharmonic was halfway through its regular Sunday concert when the music faded and I heard the fateful words, “Pearl Harbor.” Shaken, I called downstairs. Mother and Dad had heard it too. It was official, from the White House.

I shall ever be thankful to the Marine Corps for what happened next. On Monday, 8 December, the paper cried “WAR” in huge letters. The radio was full of reports of damage in Hawaii, and of long lines of men waiting to enlist. Like every American, I felt that I had to do something, anything that was action. The mail came, and there it was, a big brown envelope from Headquarters Marine Corps. The mailman was impressed. “Say,” he said, handing it to me, “there’s an outfit that’s on the ball.”

The envelope contained orders to present myself without delay in Buffalo for a physical examination. An hour later, I was on my way, but stopped at my friend Sam’s house to hear President Roosevelt’s speech to Congress. The “Star-Spangled Banner” blared, and I was off to war; it was only a short step, but I had something to do, something official.

The Marine recruiting station in Buffalo was easy to find. A block-long line led to the front door. Envelope in hand, I pushed through to a sergeant, the only person not besieged.

“What’s this? Orders? Right this way.”

I was whisked into the next room, where I filled out a three-page medical questionnaire. The exam was easy, except for the eye test. I knew that my color perception was faulty, so I had studied hard, and by sheer memory I called correctly the colored numbers on the chart. In fifteen minutes it was over.

On 3 January, my commission arrived, Second Lieutenant, United States Marine Corps Reserve, 08599, with rank from 16 December 1941. (In the service, I was Karl T. Soule Jr. Before that, and after, I used my middle name, Thayer. Even now, half a century later,

some of my Marine Corps friends still call me Karl.) I was almost part of the “old” Marine Corps. Years later, when I told people that my serial number was 08599, they asked for the rest of it: “Is that all there is?” General Archer A. Vandegrift, by that time commandant, was number 2. I was only 8,597 numbers behind him.

First I had to get a uniform. The Royal Uniform Company, the only store in Rochester that dealt in that sort of thing, stocked everything for soldiers and sailors, but little for Marines: insignia, belts, and a few odds and ends. Even the shoulder bars differed from those that I needed. Unless I went to the Marine Corps supply depot in Philadelphia or New York, no uniform was to be had. Jonas Knopf, who had made suits for me for years, agreed to make my uniform, guaranteed to be regulation. Two weeks later, I at least looked like a Marine. The shoulder straps were sewn down in the Army way. That had to be fixed, but otherwise it was regulation. It fit beautifully, a little tight, but that too, Jonas assured me, was regulation. Twenty-five years later it was worn pretty thin, but it still fit me, pants, blouse, and all.

Once again it was time to wait. In Europe the war had already taken a slight turn for the better. The Battle of Britain was over. Hitler’s armies had been stopped before Moscow. The Pacific war, the Marines’ war, was still in its desperate days. Retreat followed retreat; disaster followed disaster. Singapore fell. The Philippines were all but lost. Two British battleships were sunk in one week by air attack alone. I kept busy with target practice, workouts at the Y, and reading, but mostly I waited for a letter that didn’t come. Then, one day of ice, cold, and scudding clouds, the envelope arrived. I was ordered to active duty.

At 0800 on 2 February 1942, I reported at 90 Church Street in New York for another physical examination: Height: 73 inches. Weight: 198 pounds. Resting pulse: 76. Blood pressure: 134 over 78. This time they caught my faulty color perception. I had memorized the chart again and thought that I had read the numbers off glibly enough. “Those are the numbers for the other set,” the doctor grinned. “It’s not important. We’ll forget it.”

It was dark when I arrived in Quantico, but this time the road was familiar. I was back where I already felt surprisingly at home.

## 2

### *Quantico, New River, and the First Division*

Until my official arrival in Quantico, my introduction to military life had been unusual, to say the least. It had started with a pleasant visit to the post and had ended with a talk with a general at Headquarters Marine Corps. Now came the real thing.

A young sergeant looked through my orders. After noting that I was assigned to Marine Corps Schools, he asked if I was ROC. What was ROC? I hadn't the faintest idea.

"No," I said, "I think not."

"He thinks not," muttered the sergeant to the man behind him. "What the hell *is* he in? This is his first station. He starts active duty today."

A talk by intercom with another office produced no results. I was not on any list of incoming officers. My papers disappeared under a mass of mail dumped onto the sergeant's desk, and I sat down to wait. The room, large and pleasant, was jammed with too many desks and too many people, but it was pleasant just the same, abuzz with activity. No chatter, no unnecessary noise, just calm efficiency—except for my orders. I was halfway through a bruised copy of *Leatherneck* when the intercom came to life.

"On that Lieutenant Soule, he's staff, MCS."

"Staff?"

"That's what it says, staff."

I was painfully aware that I should have mentioned the Photographic Section.

"OK, Lieutenant," said the sergeant. "You're staff, Marine Corps

Schools, Photo Section.” He handed me the papers as if they were contaminated and pointed out the window. “It’s over there, across the tracks. Check in there.”

Captain Nelson was glad to see me, and introduced me to the other officers. Lt. William Halpern—*First* Lieutenant Halpern—was from New York and had a background in motion pictures. Capt. Bert Cunningham, just out of Pathé News in New York, had reported in a couple of weeks before. How odd it seems now—the first meeting, the first formal handshakes with people I was to know so well. There was Dean C. Barnum, too, a career enlisted man who knew the answers to all my questions.

There were no quarters on the post. The flood of personnel since the start of the war had filled everything. Halpern said that there was a room in the house where he was staying, out on Highway 1, at Dumfries. A phone call and a quick trip got me a pleasant front room, cozy and comfortable. It was four miles from work, but, with a car, that was no problem. By noon I was back at the office for a talk with Captain Nelson. I was to be Officer in Charge of the Editorial Department. In spite of the high-sounding title, the department included only three men and had little equipment, even less room, and almost nothing to do. That was good. I needed all my time and mental ability to adjust to a whole new world.

Never let anyone tell you that the easiest way to enter military service is with a direct commission. I regret only one thing in my years with the Marine Corps: I was deprived of boot camp. In a corps filled with tradition, where everyone learned from the ground up, I floated in airily over the top, directly from civilian life into a uniform with gold bars—no indoctrination, no school, no lectures, not even a handbook. I had never had an hour’s drill, never seen a service rifle, never stood inspection, never even stood at attention, for that matter. I had no common experience with anyone around me, no understanding of military organization, not even a knowledge of everyday terms. It was two days before I learned that the “head” was the men’s room. I was in uniform and looked like a Marine, but I felt like a jerk. There was a war on, they said, and I had special knowledge: no time for three months, or even three weeks, of school. I was needed right then, so there I was. I was saved by a handbook and two men. Barnum was one.

Barnum was a master sergeant, an NCO (noncommissioned officer) such as only the Marine Corps can produce. Short, stocky, graying, with a small mustache, he was well along to retirement when the war started, but he was still sharp. He was “line,” which was all there was in the “old” Marine Corps. He knew the ropes and all the angles, and he was shrewd. He never spoke unless he had something to say. When he did, he could be heard a block away if that was necessary. He addressed officers in the old Marine Corps manner of the third person. He made suggestions so tactfully that a superior would take them for something he himself had thought of. He had a “bay window” from too much time behind desks—and in front of bars—but he was neat and quick, observant and understanding. He recognized my difficulty at once and, from the first, was helpful and thoughtful. He never said that he knew it was tough for me, but he knew.

Barnum was needed in the Photo Section because we were a screwy outfit. The quartermaster didn’t understand our requisitions. The general couldn’t make out our reports. Personnel was unhappy about “specialists.” Captain Nelson was Annapolis, officer in charge because he had recommended that the Corps have a Photo Section. He was acceptable from the Corps’ viewpoint, but the rest of us were different. Someone had to straighten us out. When the Corps gave Barnum the job, it knew what it was doing.

The other man to whom I shall always be grateful was Master T.Sgt. Morris Abrams. After fifteen years in major Hollywood studios, he knew more about editing film than I would ever know. He too had come into the Corps as a specialist, but he had been to boot camp and knew the essentials of military life. I outranked him and had taken his job. On paper, I was the know-it-all, the boss. But I knew nothing about the military angle and had only a nodding acquaintance with a phase of motion pictures in which he had spent the best years of his life. He never complained. He was tactful, understanding, and oh so patient. He was good at hiding a grin, a smile, or even laughter. I’m sure he did so several times those first few weeks.

Between them, Barnum and Abrams got me started and kept me headed in the right direction. I think it was Barnum who saw that I didn’t get duty as watch officer or as inspecting officer until I had some idea of what I would have to do. As the most junior second

lieutenant in sight, I should have caught the duty early and often, especially on weekends. My name never came up. Barnum gave me a couple of manuals to read and made sure that I read them. After three weeks, when I drew my first watch, I was as ready as I could be.

Abrams, aside from being good technically, was sharp. His quick, analytical mind generated ideas in a solid stream, and a surprising number were good. He briefed me so well on each new situation that only months later did I realize how successfully he had insulated me from embarrassment.

The officers were a help, too, but I couldn't go to Captain Nelson with trivial things. At that time, trivial things were important to me. Halpern knew the answers, but he was usually in New York or somewhere. Cunningham was kind and helpful but often in the dark himself. The critical first weeks passed. I made the grade somehow, partly by frankly admitting what I didn't know.

There was nothing in my work that could not have been postponed. We had film to work on, but it was old material, some of it dating from the early 1920s. As the "ultimate military authority" (!) I had to decide what was "archival," as Captain Nelson put it, and what could safely be discarded. We had to make room for the deluge of footage soon to come. There was time, plenty of time, for boot camp or, at least, indoctrination. Maybe there wasn't any indoctrination school then. It was only sixty days after Pearl Harbor. Many times I wanted to forget my bars and be a private in a boot platoon. I tried, but always there was some excuse. "No," the captain said, "it wouldn't be practical."

What I did learn I picked up after hours. Now and then I dropped into an ROC (Reserve Officers Class) classroom. I watched drill from the sidelines but couldn't participate. I ran training films for myself, but that was secondhand and never enough. I had none of the physical exhaustion of boot camp, none of the labor, dirt, or daily grind, but my initiation into the Corps was hard. I wouldn't wish it on anyone. It wasn't fair to me, nor to the men for whom or to whom I was responsible.

Quantico was essentially a school, not large or crowded. Most of the buildings were permanent, although many had been built as temporaries during World War I. Quantico had wide streets, green



lawns, and the benefit of an extensive building program that had been completed just before the war. The new Post Exchange had recreational facilities, a cafeteria, hostess house, museum, library, and a large theater. Blocks of residential apartments crowned nearby hills.

The town of Quantico was a single street running from the grimy railroad station down to the Potomac River, and the new Naval hospital. Trains took us to Washington, D.C., in less than an hour. Buses left frequently, especially on weekends. Weekends were important. It was well into February before our work continued through all of Friday, and even later before there was any serious activity on Saturday morning. Each step away from the leisurely life of peacetime was made reluctantly.

Evenings I had dinner in the Waller Building officers' mess, a typical service club of prewar days. Slot machines lined the basement bar, and waiters staffed the dining room. Food was acceptable, but seldom good. A year or so later, a cafeteria replaced the regular dining room service, and the slot machines disappeared. The place was overrun by hundreds of newly minted second lieutenants. In February and March 1942, however, there was room for all.

From the Waller Building, a short walk down the hill took me to the PX, where the movies were free and changed every night. I remember the marble entrance, the foyer, the climb up the broad steps to the balcony, and the blast of sound as I entered the auditorium. Music plays a major part in memories. That winter it was "Moonlight Cocktails" every night, so loud it rattled the glass in the exit lights.

I made many friends in Quantico, but none of them stayed long. They were all going somewhere, just as I would someday. Ben Mitchell was a great companion on a walk. We spent Washington's Birthday at Mount Vernon: the rolling sweep of lawn down to the river; the mansion with its charm and dignity; the cold, windswept gardens; the leaves brown and dried by winter. Two days later Ben's orders came, and, like the others, he was gone.

War Time began in February. Afternoons were longer, but mornings were dark beyond belief. On gloomy days we couldn't see the top of the flagpole at Morning Colors. Railroad traffic increased each week. Trains thundered through around the clock: freights half a mile

long, passenger trains of old, beat-up coaches roaring by at seventy miles an hour. Whistles screeched in the night, or moaned long, low, and far away on the trestle to the north. In one twenty-four-hour period, men on watch counted one train every twelve minutes. The tracks ran through the center of the post, and crossing gates were down most of the time. In 1944 an underpass was built, but in those early days we had to wait for a train to pass almost every time we wanted to cross.

Several ROCs were going at once. This gave me more opportunities to attend lectures and to get more instruction on my own. Colonel Anthony J. Drexel Biddle of Philadelphia, an officer of the old school and from a distinguished family, gave his celebrated demonstration of bayonet fighting. He was well over fifty at the time, a grizzled, tough man. After a brief talk, he grabbed a rifle with a fixed bayonet and ordered a man nearby to charge him with his.

"Try to kill me," shouted the colonel. "If you don't, by God, I'll knock you down!"

The lad came at him full tilt, but the colonel was too quick. He stepped to one side and swung his rifle butt. The kid sprawled in the sawdust.

"I told you," shouted the colonel. "Now come on. You there," he growled, pointing to the burliest man in the group. "Come on, and this time let's see some action."

There was a touch of fire in the boy's eyes. Big, powerful, a foot taller than the colonel, he might have been a football player. The result was the same. The lad fell flat, chagrined but unhurt.

"Now," shouted the colonel, helping him up and looking fiercely around the group, "be glad you're alive. If I were a Jap, I'd have killed the lot of you."

Weeks slid into months in an effortless yet whirlwind way. Routine was new to me, and I enjoyed it. I was up at 0700, on the post by 0800. Often, I timed my arrival to pass headquarters at Morning Colors. The ceremony was simple but impressive. MPs carried the flag, folded in a precise triangle, to the pole, attached the lines, and stood by. This series of events produced a rush among passersby eager to get out of earshot or under cover before the bugle blew. I lingered purposely.

At 0800, a whistle shrilled, and the bugler sounded the four short notes for attention. Pedestrians froze. Drivers stopped their vehicles and got out. After a moment of silence came the joyous, uplifting notes of "To the Colors." The sound was clear and carried far, to the sentry box at the gate, to the rows of barracks along Barnett Avenue, and to the general's house on the hill. No one moved. All eyes were on the flag. It reached full mast as the last note died in the cold winter air. Again the moment of silence, then the quick "Carry on." The day had officially begun.

The Photo Section was producing dozens of film reports on tests of new equipment. Ramp landing boats were the latest word, amphibious tractors only an idea. On rare occasions, film came in from Samoa or from somewhere else overseas. On those days, the Photo Section made numbers with the brass. Activity began with a note on the captain's desk telling what the material was. There followed a flurry of phone calls, beginning with Brig. Gen. Samuel Harrington, and ending with the junior captain of the least important—to us—staff section. On a good day, we could assemble an audience of thirty in less than ten minutes. Speed was essential, for if there was time for the word to spread, the exclusive character of a premier performance would be lost. To be on our list for field film was a big deal. We were courted for it even more assiduously than we pursued and tried to please the quartermaster and the adjutant.

With everyone gathered in the auditorium, General Harrington nodded gravely. The lights dimmed, and the film flashed on the screen. The show seldom lasted more than fifteen minutes, and all we knew about it was where it came from. Detailed identifying material had a way of showing up weeks later. From the audience came "ohs" and "ahs," grunts, purrs of satisfaction, howls of disapproval, and occasional shouts of recognition. "There's Bucky Harris," someone would cry.

At other times, a lone enlisted man caught the general's wrath. "Look at that man there," he roared. "Look at that shirt, and no belt!"

Those films were our direct link with the field. We had had no action yet, but this was the front just the same. No detail escaped our notice, and that interest in detail got us our new projectors.

General Harrington, older and somewhat stooped, had a knack

for remembering names and had a nickname of his own: Sad Sam. He did have a somber expression at times, but no one had a better appreciation of a joke or a better collection of them than did Sad Sam. He could be all business, curt, sharp, even frightening at times. He ran things in a way that, half a century later, author Tom Peters called “management by wandering around.” We never knew when he might show up. One day, stars aglitter, he sauntered into Col. Charles Price’s office. The colonel, Bill Halpern, and I were sitting on Colonel Price’s desk, chewing licorice. Our mouths were full of it.

We scurried to stand up, making a hasty attempt to hide the bag and to hide ourselves, but it was too late. Halpern was equal to the occasion. “General,” he said, half intelligibly through his mouthful of licorice, “have some candy.”

The general did. With a wide grin, he pulled out the longest piece, leaned against a filing cabinet, and for almost an hour told the darndest string of jokes I had heard in months. When the licorice was gone and the stories had run out, he turned abruptly to me.

“Soule,” he said, “why do we have to have such a small picture in the auditorium? If it were really big, we could see a lot more. Can’t that be done?”

“Yes, sir,” I said. “It certainly can.” We’d been trying for weeks to get new projectors. Here was our chance. “It would take some new machines, and a larger screen, of course.”

“Ask Captain Nelson to come in and see me about it.” He bowed slightly, as he often did when leaving, and sauntered off down the hall.

With the general interested, it wasn’t long before we had two of the latest machines and a screen double the size of the old one. Sad Sam still wasn’t satisfied. “It’s got to be bigger,” he said after the first test. “I said big, and I mean BIG.”

“But General,” protested the technical man from the factory, “the charts say the screen is already oversize for this room. As you can see, sir . . .”

Sad Sam cut him off. “Nelson,” he said firmly, turning to Wally, “Big. Do I make myself clear?”

He got his wish, a giant screen across the entire front of the auditorium. It was Cinemascope twelve years early, Vistavision with a vengeance. Most of us sat in the back row, taking in the picture like

a three-ring circus. The general sat solemnly near the front, searching each scene for the smallest detail. “Ah, ah,” he shouted one day in exultation. “The safety catch is off on that man’s rifle—and his fly’s unbuttoned!”

So it went, the fun, the laughs, the work, the routine. We had inspections now and then. I spent two cold, windy days in the butts at the rifle range verifying targets as men fired for record. The crackling of fire along the line was punctuated by a harder, louder report as my target caught the sound from its own bullet.

Change was in the air. Emphasis in training shifted from defense to offense. In early February, the emphasis had been on how to hold this or defend that. Now it was on advancing and attacking. The pace was faster, too. Each day, friends got their orders and were off to some Navy yard, Pacific island, or—more often—to the new First Marine Division in North Carolina. Quantico was the fountainhead. Here the Old Corps became the new. Yet even in the fury of preparation, spirit and pride were somehow imparted to all who passed through.

Our first USO show featured Phil Spitalney and his all-girl orchestra. World leader in travelogues Burton Holmes, my former boss, came down after a show in Washington, D.C. We showed our *Alaska* film at the PX theater. Afterward, I drove Holmes to the railroad station. Even in that grimy place, he was trim, neat, and dignified as always. Seated on a wooden bench polished by thousands of Marine trousers, he put his feet up on a film case.

“Thayer,” he said, “you have a great outfit here and a nice post, but you’ll be moving along soon. God bless you wherever you go, and remember, we want you back with us as soon as it’s all over.”

Holmes was more right about moving than he knew. The next evening, as I stood near headquarters and listened to Evening Colors, the routine was ending. A brown envelope that concerned me was on its way from Washington.

I should have known when I got my apartment in the fine new BOQ (Bachelor Officers’ Quarters) that the end was near. That apartment was too good to be true: a sitting room, bedroom, and bath for a boot second lieutenant. A few days later the envelope arrived, and I moved out, headed for the First Marine Division.

I shall never believe that those orders were intended for me. I was the junior officer of the Section, with no military training or indoctrination, and less than ten weeks of active duty. The First Division, alerted for movement overseas, needed a photographic officer. Here was the chance to write the book on photographic operations in the field. The Corps had never had a division before, let alone a field photographic unit. The job called for a man with experience and tact, a man who knew the Corps, a man who knew photography and how to apply it to military needs. He should have enough rank to get things done and enough savvy to know the ins and outs, back doors as well as front. It was an assignment that any Marine would envy. Obviously, it was not for me.

But my angel was standing by. She had seen me into the Corps in the first place. That miracle would not be wasted. First of all, a line officer was out of the question. He would know the Corps, but this job called for a technician. That meant it had to be someone in the Photo Section. Captain Nelson had just assumed duties in Washington in charge of all photography. He could not be spared. Captain Cunningham was in the hospital with serious stomach trouble. Lieutenant Halpern, the most likely candidate, was away on urgent temporary duty and wouldn't be back for some time. The division was due to leave in about a month. I was the only officer available.

Captain Nelson had told me that there was big news. I had expected to go somewhere soon, but had hardly expected this. I would have an outfit of my own and would break trail all the way. Nelson asked if I could handle it. I gulped and got out a fairly steady "Yes, sir."

It wouldn't do to send a yardbird second lieutenant to the Pacific or even down to the division in North Carolina. He might be a complete jerk. But there was always the possibility that, given a chance, he might catch on and do a creditable job. There was no time for Reserve Officers Class. What was needed was a combat exercise, and just by chance . . .

So it was that 2nd Lt. Karl T. Soule Jr. became a member of Charlie Company, First Raider Battalion, Capt. Jake Irwin commanding. Straight from a desk, I joined men who had been hardened for months and were now scheduled for final testing. I drew my 782 gear: canteen, belt, mess kit, and helmet. An hour later, I joined two

hundred combat-ready troops aboard destroyer transport *Stringham*, APD-3, bound downstream from Quantico on a three-day battle exercise.

Captain Irwin, from Boston, with broad shoulders on a small frame, was tough, hard, and alert. He alone knew my background and why I was there. "Watch me, Lieutenant," he said, "and keep your mouth shut. If you don't understand, ask. And for Pete's sake, don't give any orders. Got that? Not to anybody!"

Those three days were my indoctrination in the Marine Corps. I took no exam, and there was no diploma, but what a school it was! I learned first that even a captain in the Raiders could be a gentleman with a real heart. For all his toughness, Irwin never forgot his men. They were even tougher than he was. Four-letter words ricocheted everywhere, but at heart these guys were just like anybody else. Raiders! The name scared me. Bill Jones was big as a barn, with a ham-like fist, but I beat him at Indian wrestling. Or did he let me win? The Raiders were a happy lot, loud and unruly at times, but their cockiness came from pride and confidence. Horseplay vanished in an instant when there was work to do.

During that trip, I met the Navy, too. *Stringham* was a converted World War I destroyer that was stripped of two of her four stacks, two boilers, and almost all of her armament to make room for a company of men with all their gear. It was close quarters: bunks in tiers of four jammed in so tightly that only inches were between my nose and the overhead. Foul air, bad light, heat, and no fresh water. We steamed down the Potomac River and up Chesapeake Bay to anchor the next day off Solomon's Island, a name that as yet bore no connotation for any of us.

I have always enjoyed being able to say that the first time I hit the beach was with the Raiders. Things were simple in those days. We climbed down the nets into the Higgins boats, rendezvoused off the port bow, and headed for the beach—no supporting fire, no beach master, no ground panels. Raiders relied on surprise. The quicker the trip to shore, the better. Our boat grounded on the sand, and we ran ashore. Everyone except me knew what to do. The scene looked like one from the movies that I had seen so often on Sad Sam's giant screen, but this time I was a part of it. I saw for myself how even a

## Quantico, New River, and the First Division / 25

highly trained, skilled outfit can become confused, how the little things can go wrong, how the big things can go right. Best of all, it made sense to me, and I could keep up. I kept out of the way most of the time, and apparently asked a minimum of stupid questions.

We made three landings at Solomon's Island, two in daylight, one at night. After the first, we sat under some pine trees just in from the beach. Captain Irwin had compliments and criticisms for everyone, but most of his scorn was directed at his maps. Made many years before, they were sketchy at best. Now, after two decades, they were useless. He stormed across the road, disappeared into a gas station, and came back a moment later with an Esso Oil Company map of Maryland.

"Now," he roared, "we're going to get somewhere!"

We laughed, and he joined in. Then his face froze. Pointing a long finger, he turned to face each of us. "Laugh," he shouted. "OK. But remember, if this was *it*, we'd all be dead ducks. A good map is our best friend. Where we're going, there aren't any gas stations to help us out. We've got to know where we are, or we're gone. You hear me? Gone! And there ain't no coming back!"

He held a cigar butt in the corner of his mouth and looked straight at me, his blue eyes sharp. "We all have to learn," he said quietly, "and we don't have much time. When the day comes, we'll get just one chance, just one, so learn well and learn fast."

We had an eight-mile hike that afternoon, and the next day we rode by truck back to Quantico. I never saw Irwin or the company again, but I had been to school and apparently had passed. Two days later the brown envelope landed on my desk:

### HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS Washington

21 April, 1942

FROM: The Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps

TO: Second Lieutenant Karl T. Soule Jr., Marine Corps  
Reserve (08599) Marine Corps Schools, Marine  
Barracks, Quantico, Virginia



*26 / Shooting the Pacific War*

VIA:            Commanding General, Marine Barracks,  
                 Quantico, Virginia, The Commandant, Marine Corps  
                 Schools

SUBJECT:      Change of Station

1. You are hereby detached from your present station and duties, will proceed to the Marine Barracks, New River, N.C., and report to the Commanding General, First Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, for duty with that division.

2. The travel herein enjoined is necessary in the public service.

T HOLCOMB

The First Marine Division, Maj. Gen. A.A. Vandegrift commanding, had been formed only months before my arrival. Old Marine Corps, the Old Breed, it was filled with salty noncoms and twenty-year officers, men who had fought in Central America and Haiti, men from China and the fleet, career men who saw their first action in Belleau Wood. It was the full flower of more than a century and a half of history, and no one was allowed to forget it. The old professionals were diluted with a flood of ninety-day lieutenants and ten-week boots, but the backbone was there, ramrod-stiff tradition and pride, service and respect for service. It was a changing outfit, growing by the hour. New arrivals were accepted instantly. We were a team. We had a job to do. "Urgent mission" filled the air.

I was to be Assistant Intelligence Officer for Photography, Division Intelligence Section, D-2. The office was at the end of a long hall in a low wooden building, a temporary structure with plywood partitions. The foundation was none too solid. My steps rattled the walls. I paused at the office door, adjusted my tie, and stepped in.

A boyish-faced private first class looked up from his typewriter. "Yes, Lieutenant?"

"Lieutenant Soule, reporting for duty," I said as smartly as I could.

"Soule!" roared a voice from beyond the partition. "In here."

The Pfc. jerked his head toward the door, and I went in.

Colonel Frank Bryan Goettge was as big as an ox. Rising from behind his desk, he looked like a mountain, a huge mass of a man towering above me. He had gray hair, glasses, a garden of ribbons on his shirt, and an almost fatherly look in his eyes.

"Welcome aboard, Lieutenant." The voice fitted the man, firm and heavy, but friendly and warm. We shook hands with a tight, firm grip.

"Now," said the colonel, motioning me to a chair, "you can clear up a mystery for me. What the hell is a photographic officer?"

There it was! I was on the frontier. From here on, I would be cutting trail all the way. Quickly, I outlined the job as I saw it: a record of significant phases of training and of all operations against the enemy, providing visual aids in intelligence: panoramas, aerial photographs, whatever photography could do to aid in the job ahead.

"What about maps, Lieutenant?"

"Maps, sir?"

"Yes, maps. We've got some kind of map-making outfit, or we're supposed to have. I read about it somewhere, a . . ."

He shuffled some papers on his desk and, finding one, adjusted his glasses. "A shipboard photo-litho outfit."

He looked at me over the top of his glasses, a question in his eyes.

"No, sir," I said. "I haven't heard of that."

"Well, it says 'photo-litho' so I guess it's your baby. We're going to have to write the book, Soule, you and I. Your job is going to be what we say it is, and this is part of it. OK?"

There's only one thing a lieutenant can say to a colonel. I said it: "Yes, sir."

"OK," said the colonel, "get with it."

He rose, and we shook hands again. He held mine a moment. That fatherly look was in his eyes. "If you need help, boy, that's what I'm here for."

Here was a man I could work with.

"Schlaghek," shouted the colonel as I walked to the outer office, "get Lieutenant Soule squared away so he can start work. He has a job on his hands."

In an alerted division, every man is fully equipped. I found a

tent with an empty cot, dumped my gear, and drew my field equipment, helmet and all. By midmorning, I was back at the office.

Word had preceded me. When I entered the room reserved for my unit, the men were on hand, all of them uneasy, none more so than I. I was the technical expert, the officer in charge, the man from headquarters—who had never served with a field unit in his life and who had no idea what a photo-litho set was.

First days should never happen. Every word tips the scales. Each question, each answer weighs in the balance. In a military organization, even in one made up only of civilians dressed alike, there is an unnatural separation between the man in charge and those with whom he works. Regardless of his qualifications, he's the boss. He wears the fact on his sleeve or shoulders. There can be no argument with his orders. His men can't replace him, strike, or even quit. They are stuck with him, just as he is stuck with them, often in the closest quarters and in the most desperate situations. They are married to each other, for better or for worse, "‘til death or transfer." Within this framework develops the cooperation that must exist if the unit is to function at all. This spirit makes bearable even the toughest situation and brings the unit through with pride. It builds men and wins wars. Without it, there is nothing. That first day, in the first probings of personality, each word, each phrase is important. There and then, the spirit is born and begins to grow.

Introductions were stiff and formal, but I sensed at once a good deal of know-how and professional pride. Most of the men were old hands. A few were reserves recently called to active duty. One or two were almost as green as I, fresh from boot camp, but with technical experience in civilian life. Pfc. Earl Swenson was slick and competent. He would want to see how good I was. So would Corporal Doran. Cpl. Howard Benson was tall and blond, a good kid with a flair for drawing and telling jokes. Cpl. Joseph Kashuba was loud and fast and tough, the old school through and through. Privates First Class Ralph Wendling and Russell Esberger were my litho men, long on technical experience but new to the Corps. There were others, but these men I remember from that first day, the beginning of a new life for all of us. It was a clean slate except for the names, a slate soon to be filled with success and tragedy.

The photo-litho set was our biggest problem: heavy, awkward, bulky, in more than seventy boxes. From careful night reading of the instruction books (which I smuggled out of the office) and the happy coincidence that my father owned a printing company, I was able to be reasonably intelligent about it. I soon found, however, that Wendling and Esberger knew all there was to know about the equipment. If left alone, they would do a splendid job. With my main concern thus diminished, I turned to the photographic part of my work. Maps and charts from the litho set were of supreme importance to division, but headquarters wanted pictures, lots of them.

We had a darkroom, some cameras, and technicians, but there had been no serious training, no preparation for departure. We had almost everything we were supposed to have but not nearly enough for a prolonged operation. In trying to rectify this, I had my first contact with the quartermaster and the mysteries of the TBA (Tables of Basic Allowances). Those tables were based on complete resupply after one month. The supplies we had were out of balance—far too much paper, not enough chemicals; too much of one size of film, not enough of another. There were hundreds of cans of some chemicals, six of others. Quartermaster Clerk Gallias Matheny, a warrant officer, was sympathetic, but most of the materials were new to him. For a man accustomed to dealing with tents, rifles, mess trays, and cartridge belts, the nomenclature of photography was beyond comprehension. What was glacial merck, he would ask, or DK-50?

Even with a top priority, there was a limit to what we could do in a few weeks. Mr. Matheny had spent his life in the Corps and knew everyone in it. He saw I had a problem and did what he could to solve it. He took my word on what I absolutely had to have and went to bat. What he could do officially through channels, he did. What had to be done under the counter was done that way. Sometimes a phone call was needed. Once, when it meant a toll call to Washington, he paid for it himself. By juggling things here and there, he came up with a large part of what we needed most. It was a thrill to work with him. He was truly part of the backbone of the service.

Many who knew the Marine Corps in later years didn't appreciate the importance of warrant officers. They stood just below a lieutenant and above all enlisted men. It was an awkward position, a

social no-man's-land, but it commanded respect. A warrant officer had come up the hard way. He often knew more about his work than did those above him. He could get more done in less time than anyone else. If a matter needed contact with a colonel or a general, he had known him in Haiti. If a sergeant was involved, a friendly word would do the trick. Warrant officers knew everybody and could handle any situation.

At New River, I learned a lot from warrant officers. I respected their judgment, and like to think that a few of them respected my technical knowledge. At any rate, we got along. Some officers were not so lucky. Many ninety-day-wonder lieutenants looked at a man's collar and acted according to what they saw there. If it was the insignia of warrant rank, a second lieutenant had nothing to fear. He could tell and demand. It happened time and again. Then, one day in May, the reckoning came. Warrant officers were suddenly *first* lieutenants. Before a month had passed, some were captains, and by the end of the summer, a few were majors. The ninety-day wonders came up short. A few of us who had started on the right foot found that we had friends in high places. I could get almost anything for the asking.

Almost anything. Some things only a general could do. Brig. Gen. William B. Rupertus, assistant division commander, was deeply interested in photography. He often came into my office to see our latest pictures and examine our newest equipment. In the evening, he came to our outdoor movies, sometimes sitting through wind and rain to see the film to the very end. Woe betide the operator who decided at 8 P.M. that the general wasn't coming and started the show anyway. It happened only once. After that, there was a reserved canvas-backed chair. Until that chair was occupied, the show did not begin.

We needed at least one 35mm still camera and a lot of additional supplies. Mr. Matheny thought that a note to General Rupertus might do the trick: "Not through channels, Mr. Soule. It would take forever. Just write him a note and tell him what you want."

I had never written a note to a general, but I made a list of what we had to have and composed an informal note. Next day, the general stopped at my desk. "Soule," he said, "what's this about a 35mm camera?"

I told him the story, and he nodded. "And all this gear. Do you have to have it?"

"Yes, sir."

"What's the matter with the quartermaster? They're the ones to see, you know."

"Yes, sir, I know. But the material just isn't there, and Mr. Matheny . . ."

"Mr. Matheny, eh? I might have suspected that. Well, if he says so, I think we can work out something." There was a small, short smile under the mustache. "Be in my office in an hour," he said.

That afternoon, I was on my way to the Depot Quartermaster in Philadelphia, armed with a signed blank requisition. "That," the general said, "will make them turn green, but you'll get what you want."

It turned out that much of the gear was already in New River, improperly labeled, stored in a distant warehouse. The new camera was procured, the additional supplies purchased. By the end of the week, some of them had already arrived. The moral: Never underestimate the power of a general or a warrant officer.

Technical Sergeant John Waddick was also of the old school. He had been in the Corps all his life. It *was* his life. He understood the function of intelligence, but photography was beyond him: "We fit the whole first war without it, and all them wars in the Caribbean, and we got along fine. Now you guys come along with all this junk. I never see so many boxes in my life."

He was right. As our supplies rolled in, the pile of boxes rose alarmingly. There would be more than a hundred in all.

"And another thing, Lieutenant. Who pays for all this stuff, this film and paper and stuff?"

Waddick sat down in an old chair, effectively hiding it beneath his corpulent form. Even at best, he was a bit sloppy, and his English was something for the books, but he was a technical sergeant and knew more of the ins and outs of the division than anybody in our section.

"Why, Mr. Soule," he continued, "you think you got problems 'cause you can't get five hundred sheets of paper. When I was at the Disciplinary Barracks in Portsmouth, we was allowed four thumbtacks a quarter, one tack a month. If we wanted more, we bought 'em our-

selves, and we did too! I confiscated all I could find, but we never had enough. You ain't got trouble, Lieutenant; you just got too much of everything!"

As the weeks went by, my unit grew, and the men became more competent. We produced aerial photographs, maps, reconnaissance photographs, even a few movies. We needed also some general pictures of our camp. Large and busy though it was, Tent City was temporary. In a few months it would be gone. We would leave even before that. This was the time for pictures. The best overall view would be from the top of the water tank, a hundred feet above the ground (there were no helicopters in those days). I got our big camera, a tripod, and set out with Privates Robert Howard and Edward Sexton to climb the tower. From the base, it was daunting. A narrow steel ladder led up along one of the supporting girders. The men stood back in dismay. Sensing their hesitation, I started up first. It was scary! The wind whistled around me. The ladder wobbled. I wobbled. Howard and Sexton followed reluctantly a few feet behind. By the time we got to the top, we were shaking more than the ladder was. The wind picked up. We held tightly to the camera, the tripod, and each other. The views were even better than I had hoped for, and the light was perfect. Going down was worse than going up, but in an hour we were back on the ground. We had the pictures, and had won some points with the other men, who had watched from a respectful distance.

Even with all our photographic work, we had time for combat training. We scheduled an exercise in an experimental collapsible rubber boat that could carry ten men. Designed for reconnaissance, the boat could be stowed in small quarters, but could easily be inflated from a cylinder of compressed air. We would be towed by a powerboat down the inlet, then paddle to the wooded shore on the far side. We hoped that someday—or preferably some night—we might go ashore on a Japanese-held island to gather information for a full-scale landing.

Sergeant Waddick decided to come along. The boat towed us down the inlet. From there, we struck out for shore, ten men paddling hard. We made the landing and, on the return, were again taken in tow by the powerboat. We were late. The coxswain headed for home with the throttle wide open. As he gathered speed, our boat suddenly

buckled. Water poured in from both sides, dumping us overboard. The powerboat went on, taking our boat with it. We were in deep water with nothing to hold onto. Shouts brought the boat back, but Waddick was in trouble. He didn't panic or even show excitement. Reaching out, he put a firm hand on my shoulder and said quietly, "Will the lieutenant please give me a hand? I can't swim."

That was it—no shout, no wild kicking. He had analyzed the situation and concluded that there was no danger but that something should be done without delay. He made his request to the next higher authority.

New people continued to report in. One of them, Capt. Sherwood F. Moran, was seated at a table one morning when I came into headquarters. An elderly man with white hair, he wore his green uniform, though the post had long since changed to khaki. His captain's bars were on the wrong way, parallel to his shoulders instead of at right angles. He had taken his pistol apart and was ruefully contemplating a handful of parts. As the door closed, he looked up, his eyes sparkling.

"Ah ha," he said. "Here's an expert. I got this thing apart, and I can't get it back together."

He was so frank that I warned to him instantly. I was not an expert, but in a moment we had the pistol back together with no parts left over. "Thank you, Lieutenant," he grinned. "I'm new at all this stuff. You are a lieutenant, aren't you? You see, I just got my commission. I'm a language officer. This military stuff is new to me."

That was the start of a long and warm friendship. He had been a missionary in Japan for almost thirty years. Now, at fifty-eight, he had been commissioned a captain in the Marine Corps Reserve. For the next year or so, we shared a rugged, dangerous life, but Captain Moran, the old fellow with white hair, enjoyed every moment and made the most of it.

Across the inlet from our tent city of New River, the permanent base of Camp Lejeune was rising. It was a maze of sand roads and half-completed buildings, but it would soon become the largest base in the history of the Corps. It was in a desolate part of North Carolina, covered with scrub pine and infested with ticks. Captain Moran sized up the situation well: "The place," he said, "is good for nothing but a camp. That's why it's here."



With liberty areas so far away and so little time for furloughs, we had an intensive program of in-camp recreation: sailboats on the inlet, plenty of organized sports, and swimming in the ocean. Onslow Beach was one of the finest on that part of the coast, but it was ten miles away at the end of a rough, sandy road. We went several times in a large truck. On our last excursion, we arrived at the end of the road to find that the ferry that crossed the Intracoastal Waterway was on the far side. The operator lolled in the sun, apparently with no intent of coming for us. Leaving the truck, we walked beside the water. I had gone some distance when I heard Kashuba shouting to the operator at the top of his voice, using words and phrases that only an old Marine would know, none of them complimentary to the operator or to any member of his family. I raced back to the truck, but by that time the cussing had had its effect. The ferry was on its way over. The operator and Kashuba glared at each other during the whole trip, but not a word was said.

We had a good swim and, as the sun went down, drove back to the ferry. Now it was on the mainland side. (Ferries are invariably on the side opposite a potential customer!) This time the operator was totally deaf. Shout, plead, and cajole as we would, he wouldn't come, not, he informed us through a megaphone, "until that loud-mouthed corporal of yours swims over here and apologizes in person!"

Kashuba turned purple and red all at once. His blond hair was almost white. The color rose in his face. The men were on him in an instant. "All right, wise guy, how about it? Get going, and make sure you sound really sorry."

Kashuba wouldn't budge. "No, goddamn it, he had it coming. I don't care if we sit here the rest of the war."

It was 1700. We would have to go like mad to be back for chow. The breeze was cold, and some of the men were still wet. They descended on Kashuba. His shirt went one way, his shoes another, his pants another. He hit the water with a splash. Followed by shouts of encouragement, he swam the narrow channel, and after a few minutes the ferry came for us. All the way back to camp, Kashuba sat on the tailgate glaring darkly into the gathering night, his "Death before Dishonor" tattoo livid in the darkness.

The division was on the move for New Zealand, though it was

supposed to be a secret. Five trains left each evening: dozens of box-cars of baggage and gear, and flatcars by the score, loaded with tanks and trucks, all the heavy equipment. Whole sections of camp were already empty. We would be on the last train on the last day. At the request of Colonel Goettge, I made a preliminary report for MARCORPS (Headquarters Marine Corps) on our operation to date, with my recommendations for the future. I was concerned with basics:

1. Too few supplies are authorized for the work that is contemplated, too few to justify the equipment and personnel assigned. Many supply items should be quadrupled.
2. The entire unit is useless away from 110 volts AC. There should be a portable generator.
3. Standardize films, papers, and developers, both sizes and kinds. Use premixed chemicals. Replace glass articles with enamel or rubber.
4. Issue identification cards from Headquarters Marine Corps to all photographers, expressly giving them permission to take official pictures.
5. Photographers should be armed with a pistol, not a rifle.
6. The Photo Section requires some kind of portable darkroom, and some transportation.
7. Train movie men specifically as motion picture photographers, instead of merely giving a still photographer a movie camera.
8. Use color film instead of black-and-white for motion pictures.

Within six months, all the recommendations were approved. Headquarters was listening.

Day by day, the trains rolled away. As troops marched to the loading tracks, the band played "Deep in the Heart of Texas" and "Don't Sit under the Apple Tree." Each evening, General Rupertus stood nearby. As the last train pulled out, he turned and walked away. Now the last desks were closed, the last boxes loaded, the last foot-lockers hauled away. At 1700 I formed the Photo Section, and we

marched to the train. After a week of observation and secret practice, I had the commands down pat and got the whole gang into the car with no trouble. There was no one to see us off—no band, no general; they were aboard or already gone.

At 1800, with a short toot of the whistle, we rolled away from New River. It had been a happy place for me, filled with preparation and expectancy. I had learned a lot, but this was only the beginning. Now the great adventure began. It was much closer, much more adventurous than any of us, even the general, could guess.

Fifteen years after the war, while passing through the region around Camp Lejeune, I was swept with memories of 1942. Times had changed, of course, and the country, too. The slash pine was dotted with houses, barns, and whole new towns. In a corner of my mind, it was still 1942, another world, a world of friends long dead, a way of life long gone. We had lived and worked together, shared our hopes, fears, and doubts. The trivia of daily life were absurdly mixed with talk of the Great Tomorrow, when the war would be over and we would all come home.

But we didn't all come home. On an island half a world away, fate separated us, some to stay, others to return. I remember best the men who fell that first frightful week, when the jungle rattled with rifle fire and the nights were black with terror. Even now I see their faces: the colonel; blond and scrappy Kashuba; quiet, artistic Benson; timid, academic Cory; Custer, gruff and ready, but not for that; Delano; all the others. How we missed them then! How much they are part of me today!

Part of me is still somewhere in the pines, left behind when we boarded the train. That June day we left our youth behind, and with it a joyous carelessness we would never regain.

### 3

## *Overseas to New Zealand and North to Combat*

Our trip across the country was roundabout, but we rode in style in Pullman cars and diners, stopping only in major cities. South of New River, we rolled through slash pine and swamps. Road signs and station names were our only ways of knowing where we were. The land faded into darkness that only the countryside knows. As the wheels clicked on, activity in the car died. The moon rose, but still there were only the pines, a light here and there, a crossing bell, headlights of a car, then darkness again.

Next morning, we picked up a diner in Augusta and went on to Atlanta and Birmingham. Summer in the South is hot by any standard. Our cars were equipped with air-conditioning, but the fuses had been removed. A kindly porter confided that pennies in the sockets would complete the circuit. We put them in and rode in comfort. Card games thrived in every car. A few men pressed their faces to the windows, watching the land slip by, a land they might not see again. We rolled from city to city, state to state, each mile taking us farther from home and closer to our task, whatever it was to be.

Morning of the second day found us in Springfield, Missouri. That evening we were in Kansas City. But they were only names—no station, just miles of freight yards and backs of buildings. The next day, we were in the West: Laramie, Rawlins, the mountains of Wyoming, and the Great Divide. Most of the men were seeing the vast expanses and purple mountains for the first time. Shouts rang out when we saw our first cowboy, riding close to the track, big hat, chaps, and all. By afternoon it was chilly. Snowdrifts appeared here and there.

The next morning the sun rose over Salt Lake. Hours of desert followed, then the limitless vistas of Utah, then Reno—a flash of lights in the night—and the winding trip over the Sierra to Sacramento.

At 0730 on 19 June, five days from New River, we arrived in the heart of San Francisco, close to the docks. We immediately boarded *John Ericsson*, the old *Kungsholm* of the Swedish-American line, now painted a dirty gray-black. Her furniture and carpets were gone, and extra bunks filled the cabins. Tiers of bunks jammed the public rooms and holds, but there had been no wholesale tearing out of bulkheads, none of the major conversion that came a few months later. With space assigned and gear in place, we had liberty.

San Francisco is not a place to see in two days, or even two weeks. It needs a lifetime. But these were our two days, and we made the most of them. The Top of the Mark, of course. The view was inspiring: the shimmering bay, the graceful bridges, the symphony of white and blue, a strip of fog, and the ocean beyond. We paid a duty call at the Patent Leather Bar in the Saint Francis Hotel and afterward saw *Life with Father*. It was a perfect send-off, filled with laughs and no thought of tomorrow—which would come too soon.

We spent 21 June aboard ship, running a degaussing course in the bay, a series of giant figure eights to demagnetize the ship. Nobody understood the procedure, but we had a great sightseeing cruise. We sailed under the Bay Bridge a dozen times, then up toward Vallejo and back, around Alcatraz island, out toward the Golden Gate, and back again. At sunset we anchored near Treasure Island, and the band played for two hours. Afterward we sang songs we had known all our lives: “Put On Your Old Gray Bonnet,” “Let Me Call You Sweetheart,” on and on. Other songs were new to us: “Bless ’Em All” and “Waltzing Matilda.” The words floated out over the water and faded into the night. We didn’t talk much, just sang, and cried a little. Bay traffic dwindled, the last ferry slipped by on the port side, and the city slept. If this was to be my last night in America, it was a perfect memory to carry with me to any corner of the earth.

Late in the afternoon of 22 June, in a convoy of twelve ships, we rounded Alcatraz and sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge, out into the Pacific. The air was salty and cool. Topside was jammed with

men looking back, most of them silent, some misty-eyed. It was not a time for talking.

The Farralon Islands were damp and foggy. Our convoy ran without lights, making good time. With all portholes closed and every inch of space filled, the air below decks was fetid, but we were tired from our days—and nights—in San Francisco. Nearly everyone was soon asleep, with little thought of submarines or other dangers that might lurk around us.

By morning the air had cleared and the sea was calm. We were ten ships now, moving southwest at only ten knots, slowed by a rusty freighter far astern. Cruiser *Boise* joined us, reassuring as it cut from one side of the convoy to the other, first far out in front, then close by our stern. With our recent great naval victory at Midway, tension had eased in the Pacific, but there was still a possibility of enemy attack. Our ship's defensive armament was ridiculous: two 105mm howitzers and four 20mm guns lashed to the deck. Their crews test-fired them a couple of times, then stood by, glad to be outside.

A big advantage of being with headquarters was the presence of the band. Every day we had at least one concert. Some evenings, when the air was still, it seemed the music might carry to other ships around us, but the nearest was a mile away. The pleasure was ours alone.

During our three weeks at sea, always heading southwest, we saw no sign of life—no land, no ships, no birds, no fish—just the sea and sky, clouds now and then, a squall or two, then the sea once more. It went on forever. We had rifle inspections, lectures, amateur shows, and songfests. We read everything on board, piles of *Reader's Digests* and stacks of paperbacks.

What really took time was eating. Officers used the first-class dining room, sat at tables, and even had waiters. For the men, a continuous chow line began on the promenade deck and wound down into the hot bowels of the ship to counters of badly prepared slop. Only two meals were served each day. The line was so long that as soon as a man finished one meal, he lined up for the next. In all my experience in the service, that situation was the most unjust. The officers lived in relative comfort, eating good food that was well prepared. The men existed on stuff that was only a thin cut above gar-

bage. Yet they griped little, and nobody became seriously ill. As far as I could learn, while the facilities were undeniably bad, the main trouble was in the provisions brought aboard. I still suspect fraud somewhere along the line. The man in charge, a civilian member of the ship's crew, feared for his life. When we reached port, he remained on board, afraid to leave the safety of the ship.

The ship's swimming pool was literally filled with soda pop—in bottles, of course—hundreds of cases of Pepsi-Cola. Intended as PX supplies for our forward base, they never made it. With regular food so poor and so limited, to say nothing of the short supply of fresh water, the pool was soon empty.

We officers had fine quarters. Six of us shared a cabin meant for two. Plumbing in our bathroom was disconnected, and the floor was piled high with bedding rolls and footlockers, but there was circulation of air and the bunks were comfortable. Along with everyone else, however, we spent as much time as possible on deck. We were required to wear life belts at all times, but as the days became warmer and we penetrated deeper into the vast reaches of the ocean, we used them mainly as pillows as we sat or lay in the sun.

The big event of our journey was crossing the equator. Of the thousands of men on board, less than forty had crossed the line. In accordance with Navy custom, all first-timers were initiated into the kingdom of Neptune. Because of the lack of fresh water, the messiest aspects were eliminated. In view of our role as goodwill ambassadors, heads were not shaved. We would have been a wild-looking bunch if we had gone ashore, four thousand strong, with no hair! By Navy standards, the proceedings were clean and mild, but they went on all day. Paddles were wielded with full force. A deluge of saltwater streamed from fire hoses. Sick bay was busy for a week afterward.

Now we were in the true South Seas. The water was a copper color and calm. The stench below decks was so bad that we lived more and more on deck. The cruiser had a plane in the air much of the time, circling around and ahead of us. At night, with no lights, the convoy was only a dark shadow on the sea. The sky was ablaze with stars as I have never seen since, the Southern Cross directly overhead. One day, far off, we saw tall clouds—land, they said, Samoa.

Two ships left us, heading for it. We felt land swells but saw no mountains, no birds, nothing but the sea and sky. The band played on, and all the movies on board were shown again.

One day we broke down. The convoy steamed off over the horizon, and there we sat, dead in the water. Gun crews and lookouts were doubled. The plane buzzed overhead. A strange silence settled on the ship, a tension we had not felt before. From far below came the sound of pounding. After what seemed an eternity, the engines sprang to life. By steaming at full speed, we soon regained our position in the convoy.

As we left the tropics, the weather became cooler. We crossed the dateline, losing one day, and at 0900 on 10 July, we sighted New Zealand. Two planes flew over, but we saw no ships. The next morning, we entered Cook Strait between North and South Islands and steamed into Wellington harbor. It was winter. The wind was bitter and damp.

Wellington, capital of New Zealand, lies at the southern tip of North Island and boasts a large and attractive harbor. In 1942, however, the city was quaintly Victorian, years behind the times. The principal street, Lampton Quay, was narrow and winding, lined with shops like Whitcomb and Toombs, Stationers. Scaffolding had been erected to repair damage caused by a recent earthquake. What a pity more of the older structures had not collapsed! The gloom was enhanced by almost constant rain and a blackout at night. Walking along the street, we collided with posts, scaffolding, Marines, sailors, and civilians. Everyone accepted these encounters in good humor.

Though Wellington was somewhat dismal, its people more than made up for it. They had felt terribly alone and isolated. As the first American troops to arrive, we received a great welcome. Everyone from the Governor General down to the smallest newsboy was glad to see us and did his best to show it. Flight Lt. Frank Fennessy, RNZAF (Royal New Zealand Air Force), invited me to his home for dinner. We had a good meal and a pleasant evening, but I could see my breath the entire time. July, after all, is winter in New Zealand, and New Zealanders like their houses cool. The temperature once reached a point where I was almost comfortable. Frank rose from his chair.

"I say," he said, "isn't it a bit stuffy in here?" With that, he



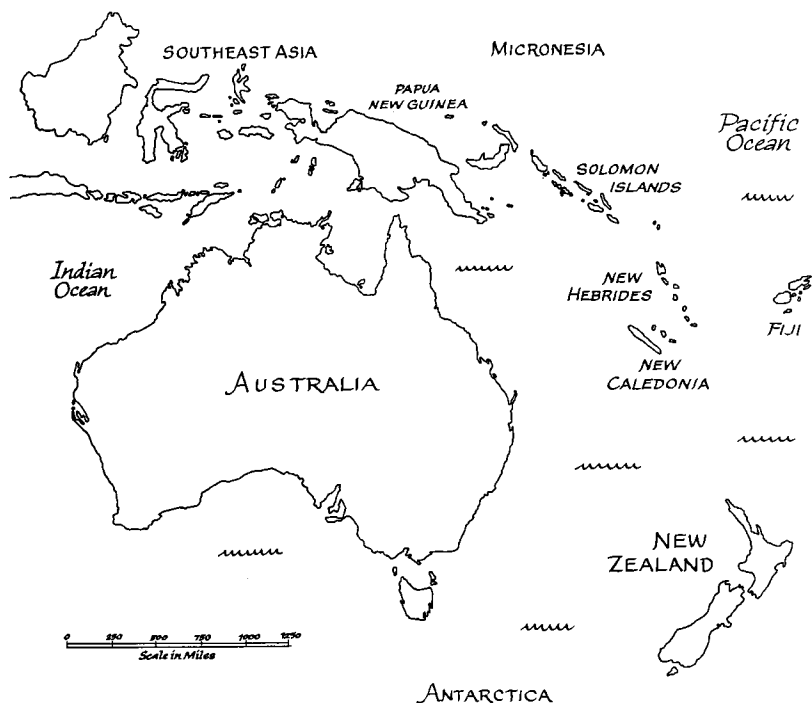
threw open the window. An icy blast swept across the room. Satisfied, he returned to his chair, and our conversation resumed.

A few nights later, George Jones and I were invited for dinner at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Burgess and their two charming daughters. The house was in Karori Park, high in the hills overlooking the harbor. Mr. Burgess picked us up in his Buick, drove us up for dinner, and back to headquarters afterward, a round trip of six miles. With gasoline rationed at less than two gallons a month, it was a generous gesture. The evening was a success, with fine roast beef and delightful conversation. This time I wore a sweatshirt under my regular shirt, warm and cozy as could be. The house, built by an old seafaring man, was snug. A cheerful fire burned the entire evening. I was more than warm, the only time in Wellington that I was satisfied with the temperature!

A bright spot in our stay was the abundance of dairy products. With its exports crippled by the war, New Zealand was overflowing with milk, cheese, butter, and ice cream. After three weeks at sea, we consumed them in huge quantities, especially the ice cream. Captain Moran was the champion, often downing a pint at a time.

We had a job in Wellington, a big, unexpected job. Immediately upon docking, we of the Intelligence Section were rushed to division headquarters in the Hotel Cecil. Colonel Goettge gave us the latest information: Our six-month training period was canceled. At the earliest possible moment we were to seize and defend the north coast of Guadalcanal, a large island in the Solomons, a thousand miles northeast of Australia. The original plan, handed to General Vandegrift at a meeting in Auckland on 26 June (while the division's rear echelon was still at sea), was to "seize and defend the island of Tulagi and adjacent positions." Tulagi, capital of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP), had the best harbor for hundreds of miles around. Only days after those original orders were issued, intelligence learned that the Japanese were constructing an airfield a few miles from Tulagi, on the north coast of Guadalcanal. The main thrust of our attack would now be against that island.

Our immediate task was to combat-load eighteen ships. With careful planning, we could have done it in four weeks. With no advance notice, we had to do it in less than two. Everything had to be spread



Southwestern Pacific. Original artwork by Don Ellis.

out on the docks, sorted, assigned new hold space, then combat-loaded, things needed first going in last so they would be on top. We took only essentials for living and fighting. Seabags, bedrolls, and 40 percent of the division's vehicles were left behind. The Intelligence Section was allowed only two of its eight field desks, only one of its three typewriters. This was the way we set out. In the landing, only a small fraction of what we brought got ashore.

The damage done in that reloading can never be calculated. Many things just disappeared. Thousands of boxes were smashed by rough handling or by the wrenching motion of cargo nets. Hundreds more were broken open and their contents stolen. Rain was almost continuous. We didn't have enough canvas to cover even a small part of the area. Boxes and chests that were otherwise intact leaked so badly that the contents were ruined. The guard was inadequate. Men and

outfits worked on the principle that government property was fair game for anyone. To make matters worse, the longshoremen's union insisted on daily tea breaks and wouldn't work at all in inclement weather, which was the only kind we had. The police ordered the union men off the quay. From then on, most of the work was done by Marines.

Amid the chaos, Marine Gunner Sheffield Banta had the only words of consolation. A career man, an old China hand, he had been everywhere and seen everything. "Boys," he said, "you think we're fouled up, and we are, but I guarantee the Japanese are in even more of a mess."

*Hunter Liggett*, an old Munson liner operated as a transport by the Coast Guard, was selected as flagship. Under the command of Captain Perkins, she was the best-run ship I had ever been on. She had an unusually large flag deck and the best signaling facilities of any ship in the harbor. We of the Photo Section moved our gear aboard and began producing maps and photographs. As I had noted in my report, our equipment would not operate on direct current, the only type on board. While scouting for a generator—I had Kashuba and Benson scouring the dock for an "unclaimed" one—we ran a wire over the side of the ship and plugged into a light socket on the pier. With this haphazard connection, we produced nearly all of the maps for the operation.

The original drawings were made in the Intelligence Section at the Hotel Cecil, where we had taken over the bar. (It still smelled like one.) There was no semblance of security. Top secret maps, documents, and aerial photographs were scattered around the room. One evening a civilian walked into the hotel, passed two MPs at the door, wandered down the hall, and, already slightly under the influence, stumbled into what apparently had been his regular haunt, now the Intelligence Section. With no difficulty, he had penetrated the inner sanctum of secrecy. I have smiled many times at reports that only the general knew where we were going. All headquarters knew. Why the word didn't leak to the enemy, I will never know.

Three days before departure, Adm. Richmond Kelly Turner, commander of the amphibious force, decided to fly his flag not in *Hunter Liggett*, but in *McCawley*, already jammed with units of the Fifth Marines. Since my unit was well established in *Hunter Liggett*

and couldn't stop work to move, we remained on board. I was thankful. Aside from everything else, Jim Whitehead and I shared a pleasant A-deck cabin with a private bath that actually worked part of each day.

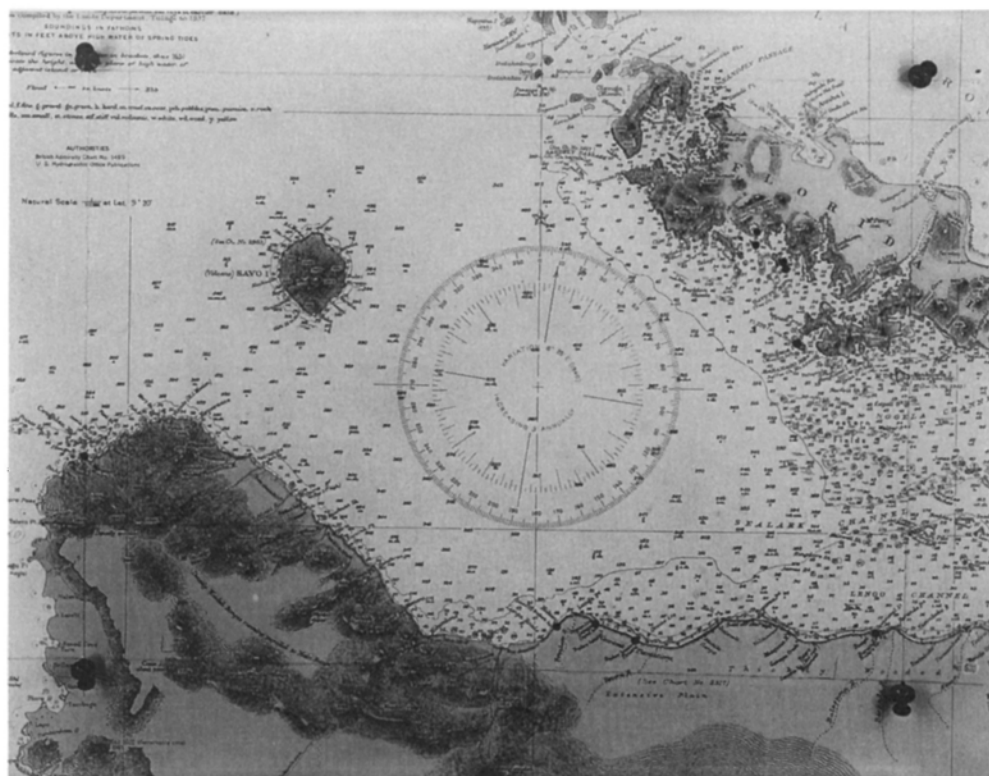
We left Wellington on 22 July, two days behind the original schedule, but far ahead of pessimistic estimates. Australian heavy cruisers *Australia* and *Canberra*, light cruiser *Hobart*, a few American destroyers, and eighteen transports made the largest convoy Wellington had ever seen. With our plane escort overhead, we headed north, following the international date line toward Fiji.

The first few days, the sea was rough. Although the ships were heavily loaded, they rolled and pitched alarmingly. Many men were sick. Our shop went out of business, both from lack of personnel and from the violent motion of everything in the room. Chemicals broke from their cases and crashed to the deck, creating a stink that lasted for a week. After two days, even though the heaving motion continued, most of the men felt well enough to resume work.

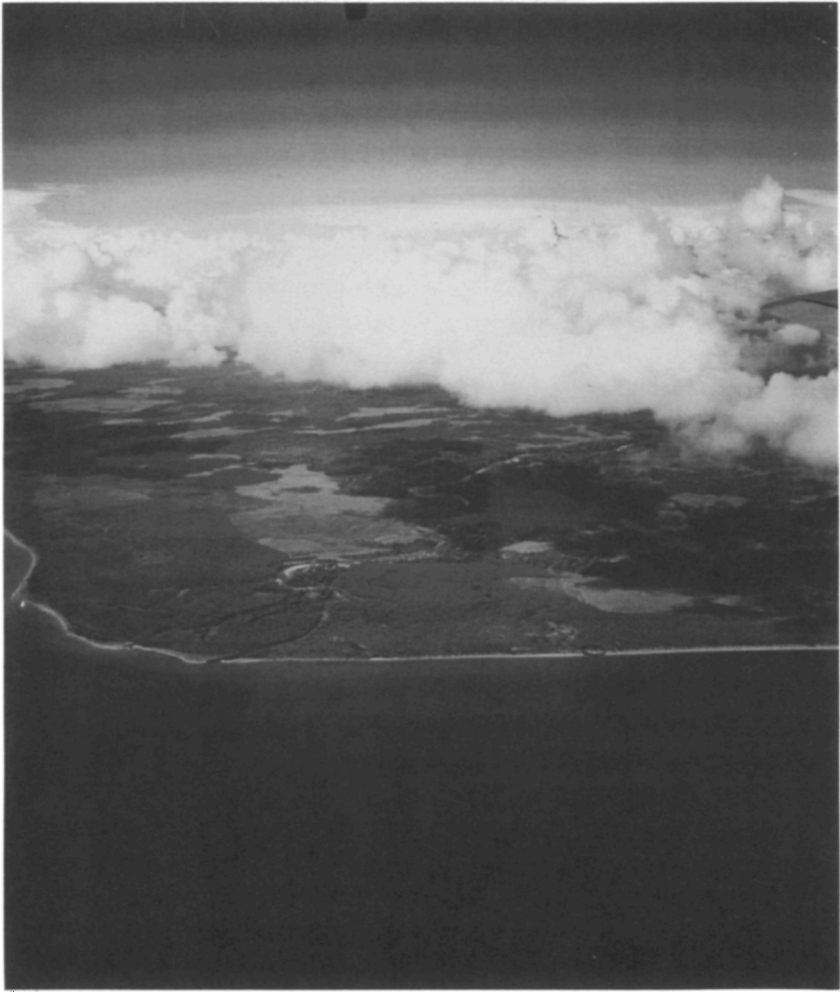
We received our orders and dispatched our finished maps and photos by guard mail. Each morning, one of the destroyers made the rounds, picking up and delivering letters and packages. Even on the roughest days, it wallowed alongside, fired a line, and passed over watertight bags. With radio silence, this mail and blinker lights were our only communication.

Practically all of our production was maps. Crude and inadequate though they were, they contained all the information we had. Charts of the Solomon Islands had last been updated in 1910. Most were done on such a large scale that they were of little help. Magnetic declination was far off from present readings. No topographic maps of land areas existed, but we made sketch maps from aerial photographs. Large blank areas showed where clouds obscured the land when the pictures were taken. At the last minute, the Navy published a map of its own. It was neater than ours, but it was on a different scale and, to make matters worse, used a different grid.

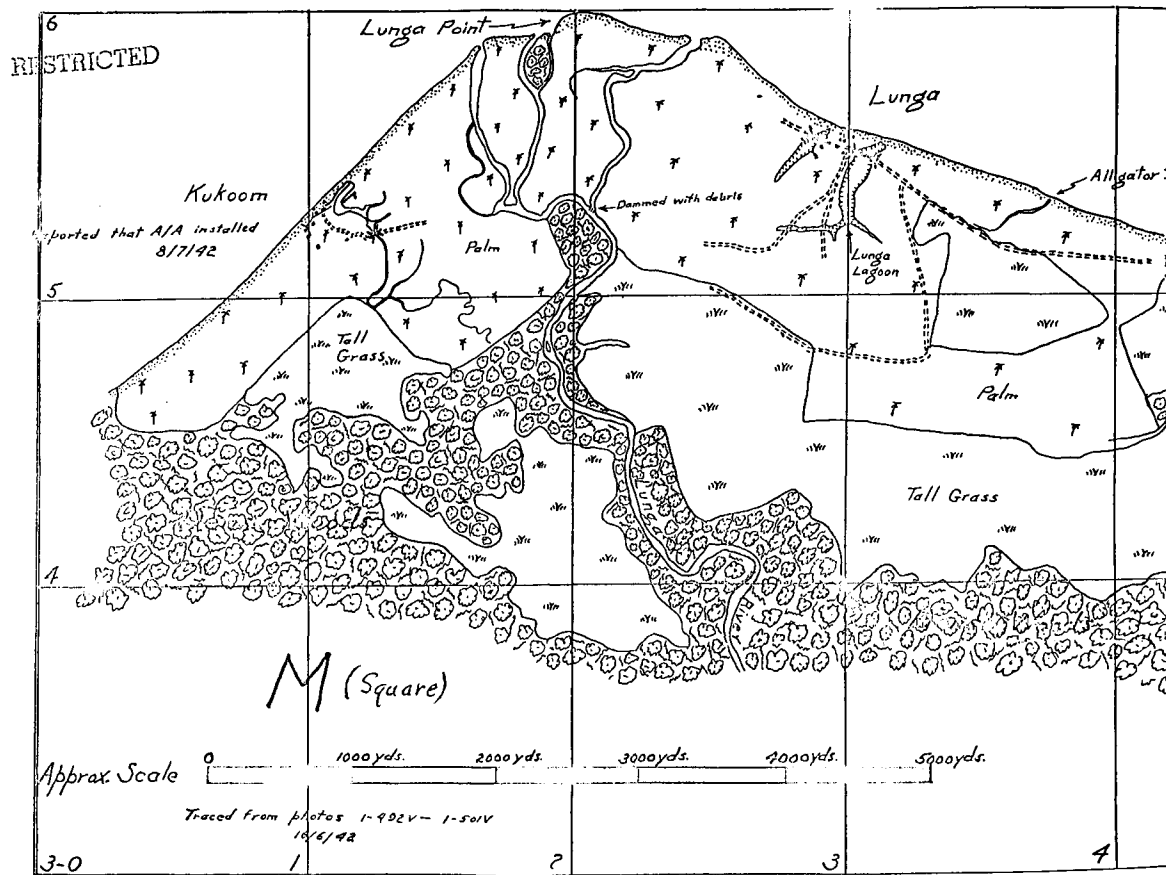
It is incredible that the division was committed on such slim intelligence and with so few supplies. However, a delay of even two or three months would not have produced much improvement in either category, and by then the landing would have been immensely more difficult. The operation was a gamble, more desperate than anyone knew.



Guadalcanal and adjacent waters. British Admiralty chart, 1940.



Taken on 24 June 1942, this was the last aerial reconnaissance photo of Lunga Point before the invasion of Guadalcanal. USMC photo.



First drawing of Lunga Point area on Guadalcanal, 16 July 1942.  
Produced by Intelligence Section, First Marine Division.

As we sailed north, the weather became warmer and the sea calmer. Our mountains of work seemed to grow rather than shrink, but our surreptitiously acquired generator, located outside atop a hatch cover, performed faithfully. Maps and photos poured out. Jim and I, in our lordly accommodations, made full use of the long, blacked-out nights to catch up on our sleep. Jim even indulged in the luxury of pajamas instead of the usual Marine Corps night garb of skivvy shorts and shirt.

Four days out of Wellington, on a cloudless, warm Sunday afternoon, we rendezvoused with other ships. We spotted first, far off to starboard, *President Adams*, *President Hayes*, and *Crescent City* bearing the Second Marines reinforced. They were accompanied by several destroyers and four destroyer-transport: *Little*, *Gregory*, *McKean*, and *Colhoun*. My old outfit, C Company, First Raider Battalion, was aboard *Colhoun*. For the first time, we had a full division in one place, but some units were not those regularly assigned. We had never worked together and had little combat training, but we were a landing force of 14,300 men, the largest ever assembled in the history of the Marine Corps.

Australian heavy cruisers *Australia* and *Canberra*, and American heavy cruisers *Astoria*, *Quincy*, *Vincennes*, and *Chicago* were on the horizon. Escorted by several destroyers, carriers *Saratoga* and *Enterprise* loomed on our port side. Battleship *North Carolina* and cruisers *Portland* and *Atlanta* were just visible. Later, far off toward the sunset, we saw carrier *Wasp* and her escort. Thrilled and inspired, we shouted, "On to Tokyo!" That afternoon, we felt that we could have done it.

For the rest of the journey, the carriers slipped in and out of sight, but most of the time they were well over the horizon with the other heavy ships. The transports huddled in the center of the convoy and, even then, continued to zigzag. We had daily drills for fire and damage control, for defending against air attack, and for other things, but no drills about using lifeboats. This seemed odd. I asked Captain Perkins about it.

"Well," he said, "if it gets to where we have to use the lifeboats, the ship will be so beat up or listing so badly that we won't be able to use half of them. I'll worry about that when the time comes, if it



comes. Anyway, life rafts are more important. They take more men and more or less launch themselves. If the ship goes down, they just float off. We don't count much on lifeboats. We keep them in top shape, but we don't count much on them."

One evening, I heard a shot in the next stateroom. Two lieutenants had been practicing quick draws. One of them had shot a Lieutenant Jones, who was watching. The bullet passed through his body. He was taken immediately to sick bay, but he died an hour later. That evening nobody had much to say. We sat on the upper deck and watched the stars.

A week out of Wellington, we arrived at the remote island of Koro, one of the Fiji group. The few inhabitants had been temporarily evacuated so that we could stage a full dress rehearsal of the landing. A four-day exercise was scheduled, but the first wave of landing boats hit a reef. We knew that the reef was there, but the staff had decided to land anyway. The tide was lower than was expected, or the reef was higher; we never decided which. The boats, some badly damaged, limped back to the ships, and the exercise was canceled. We made good use of the four days, however, partially reloading some of the ships and doing things we had not had time to do in Wellington. Warships shelled the beach, and planes made strafing runs. Everyone had a chance to identify friendly aircraft.

The lack of good information about the reef threw headquarters into a tizzy. Was there perhaps a similar condition at Guadalcanal? A staff conference was called aboard *McCawley*. We argued the possibility for an hour, carefully checked all our maps and photographs, cross-examined the Australians on board who had lived there, and finally—though we didn't know any more than we had before—talked ourselves into believing that we would be all right. The planning was haphazard, but it was the best we could do. After all, we were going to an island that few white men had visited. Information was not to be had, at least not in the detail that we needed. All evidence indicated that the planned action was a good risk. With no time for reconnaissance, there was only one way to be sure: make the landing.

On our last day off Koro, we censored mail that would leave for home. At twilight we held a military funeral for Lieutenant Jones. His coffin was placed aboard a destroyer that set off across the shim-

mering water in the direction of Suva. As it disappeared over the horizon, we wondered who would be next.

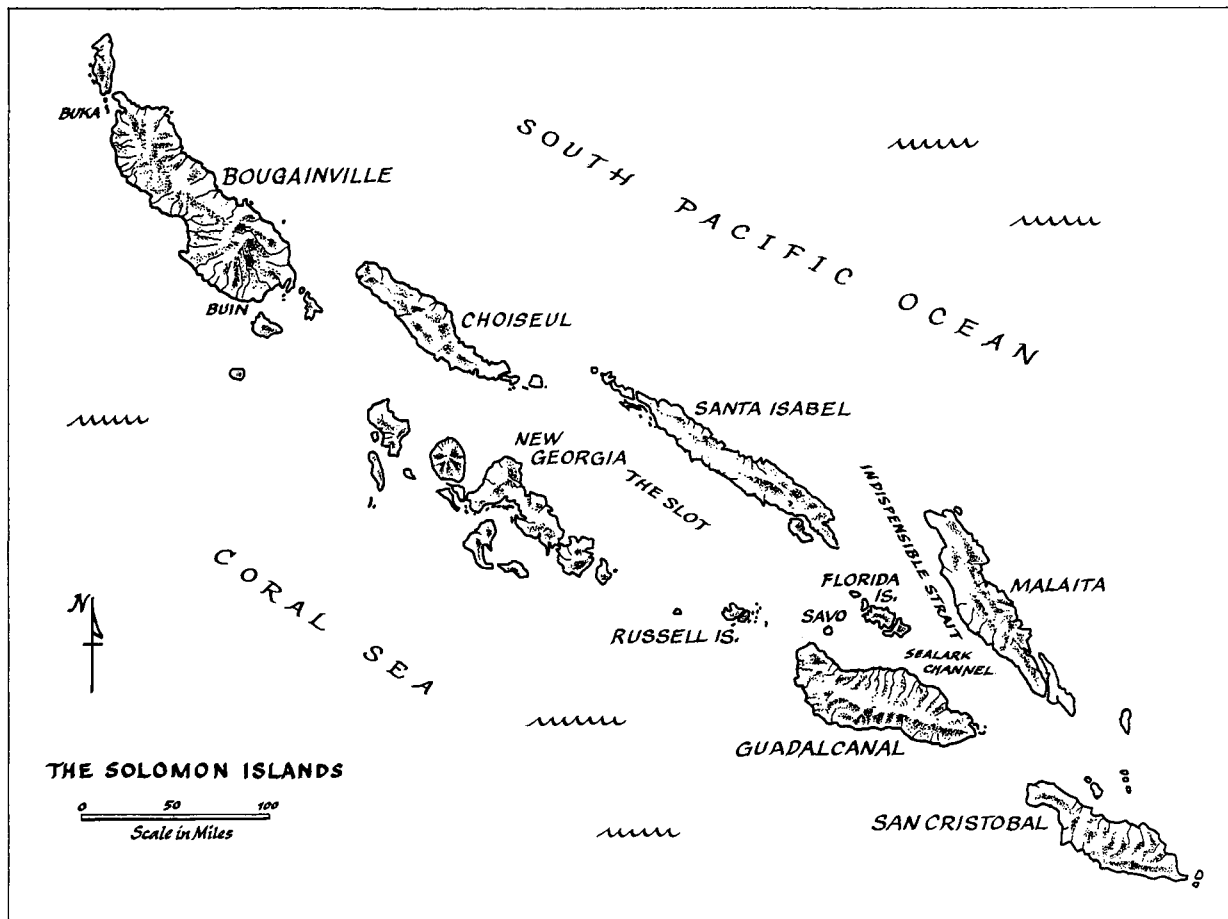
As we moved toward our objective, the convoy spent long, hazy days in the calm waters of the Coral Sea. Two ships joined us, then four more. Haze and low clouds provided ideal cover. Our planes were overhead, but we seldom saw them. Shrouded in nature's veil, we steamed on.

It may have been because of the quiet calm of the weather or because of ignorance of what lay ahead, but we were not tense. The warships reassured us. To us, the Japanese were still despised little men, sneak fighters who attacked unfairly at night. Now, in daylight, on our terms, there was no question of who would win. In the innocence that comes before a first battle, each of us felt that it was the other fellow who might be hurt.

So passed a week of South Seas sailing. The men spent the time cleaning equipment, loading machine-gun belts, talking, singing in the evenings, or just sitting on the upper deck looking at the stars. With the last sunset, we knew we were going to surprise the Japanese. I lay in my bunk and thought over what we had learned about our objective. We knew little, really, and had no detail at all. We found later that much of what we knew was either wrong or had to be modified. But that night we had all the certainty of inexperience. Our information amounted to something like this:

Guadalcanal, an island of the Solomons group, was ninety miles long and twenty-five miles wide. It had been discovered by the Spaniard Don Álvaro Mendaña in 1568, but it was forgotten. Captain Cook rediscovered it and the surrounding islands in 1788. He claimed them for England, and they had been English ever since, with no event worth recording in all that time. Guadalcanal lay on a northeast-southwest axis. A mountain range, in some places seven thousand feet high, ran its entire length. On the southern coast, these mountains fell sharply into the sea. That entire shoreline was useless for large-scale landings, but Marau Sound could be used by small ships and submarines. On the north coast, grassy plains alternated with coconut plantations, the only suitable area in the region for airfields. What appeared to be excellent beaches provided miles of landing areas.

Streams varied from tiny trickles to full-fledged rivers such as



Solomon Islands. Original artwork by Don Ellis.

the Mulimbu, Matanikau, and Lunga. Surrounding the grassy plains in the Lunga Point area, our objective, were sharp coral ridges, some of them five or six hundred feet high. Most were covered with grass, while jungle cloaked the main ranges, choked the valleys, and walled the rivers. One of the outstanding features was Mount Austen, later to be called Grassy Knoll by the Marines. Rainfall varied from three hundred inches near Aola to a minimum of ninety inches at Lunga Point.

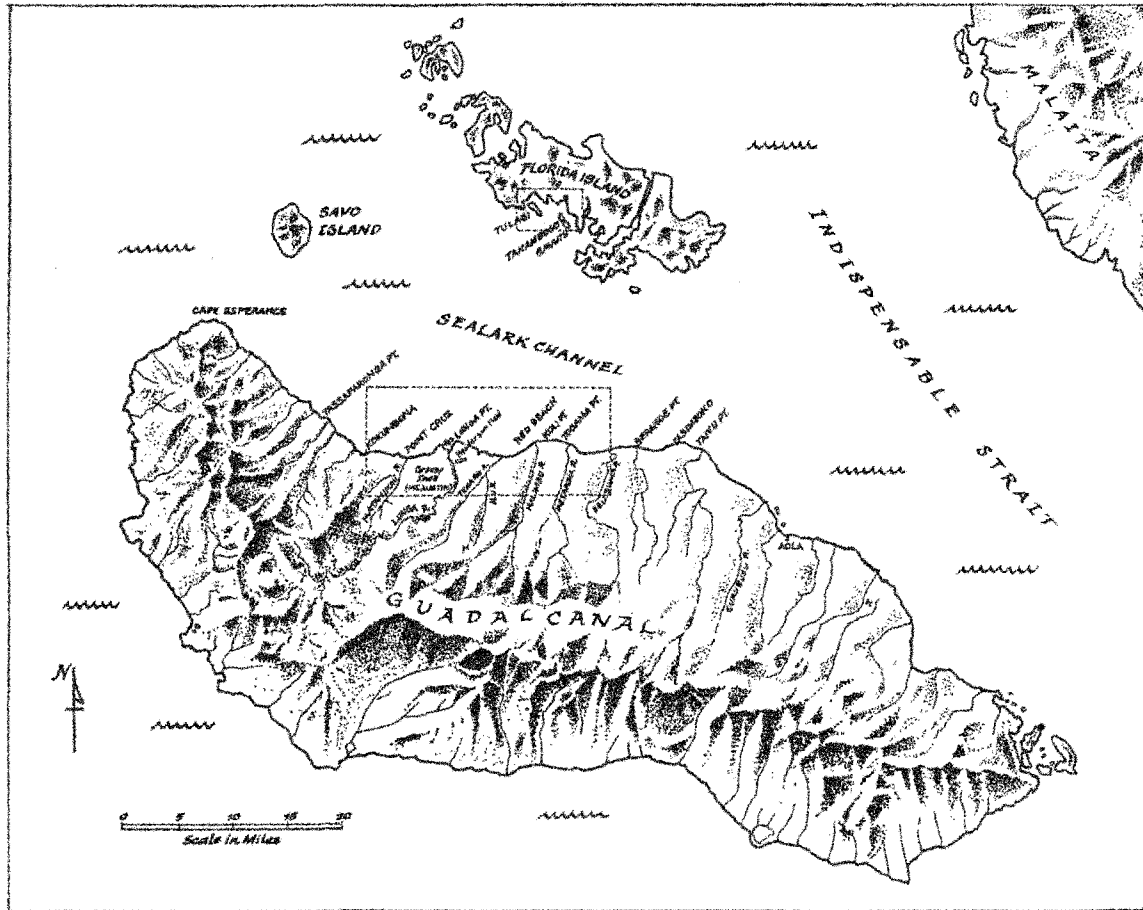
There was no large town on the island. The government station at Aola was toward the eastern end of the island, about forty miles from Lunga Point. In the western part, small missions, most of them Catholic, were located at Visale, Marovovo, and other villages. Lever Brothers Coconut Plantations employed a few hundred islanders.

The population was about nine thousand, Melanesian, jet black. In 1942 they were peaceful, but until a few years earlier they had indulged in occasional cannibalism and sporadic civil wars. Their language was peculiar to the island. This was true for each of the Solomon Islands. To make possible some inter-island communication, the British had taught the people pidgin English, a curious tangle of native and English words spoken with an inflection that resembled baby talk.

Twenty miles north of Guadalcanal was Florida Island. Thickly wooded and dented with coves and bays, it protected the north shore of Guadalcanal and created a sheltered sound between the two. In a corner of that sound, tucked up close to Florida but separate from it, lay the rocky island of Tulagi. Its harbor, 150 feet deep in places with a good channel, was the best shelter for hundreds of miles around.

Tulagi, two miles long and nowhere more than half a mile wide, was the seat of government. The resident commissioner's office was there, as well as the bishop's residence, a government hospital, and a small police barracks. A golf club, a cricket club, and a bar, which British coax into existence wherever they go, made life passably pleasant.

We were interested in topographic details. The highest point was three hundred feet above the water with a sheer drop on one side, a steep slope on the other. Mangrove swamps lined the shore. Thick jungle covered the rest of the island, except where it had been cut back for the golf course and residential areas.



Guadalcanal. Original artwork by Don Ellis.

Only three thousand yards from Tulagi were two smaller islands, Gavutu and Tanambogo. Gavutu was owned by Lever Brothers; it was their headquarters in the Solomons. A causeway connected Gavutu to Tanambogo, a depot for machinery, gasoline, oil, and other supplies. Like Gavutu, it had no vegetation to speak of.

To the west, between the tips of Guadalcanal and Florida Island, was the volcanic island of Savo, about five miles in diameter. It was of no interest to us, except as a landmark.

That was the general information about our objective. It wasn't much. We had consulted all the planters, traders, and missionaries that we could find. We even had a few of them with us, but all-important details were lacking. How deep was the water at the beaches? Could landing craft run up to the shore, or would they ground far out, forcing us to wade ashore? Would the few bridges support trucks? How high were the banks of the streams? Would we be able to identify the beaches from the sea in predawn light?

That was only the beginning. What about the Japanese? How many were there? Were the gun emplacements shown in our aerial photographs manned? Would there be planes on the field? What other forces were in the area? These were the big questions. We could get the answers only when we landed.

We did have some reliable additional information from Martin Clemens, district officer on Guadalcanal. Tall, blond, young, Cambridge-educated, athletic, he was just the sort of young bachelor that the government needed to carry on the work of empire in its more remote areas. Immediately after Pearl Harbor, the British began evacuating civilians from the Solomons. In January, Martin went to regional headquarters in Sydney for instructions. When he returned in February, his ship was bombed as it entered Tulagi harbor. The ship, only slightly damaged, departed with what remained of the civilian population.

Martin, leaving most of his personal belongings on Tulagi, went back to his station at Aola on Guadalcanal. He wasn't bothered there, but the Japanese occasionally bombed Tulagi. The first bomb destroyed everything Martin had left there, including his collection of phonograph records. Later raids leveled the hospital and then the radio station, ending all regular communication between the Solomons

and Australia. The only link was the portable radio Martin had brought to Aola. Realizing the Japanese would soon occupy the islands, Martin ferried to Guadalcanal all the ammunition, small arms, and radio batteries that he could carry. With the exception of two coastwatchers and a few scattered missionaries and miners, he was the only white man on the island.

On 3 May 1942, the Japanese landed at Tulagi. Martin radioed word to our naval forces. The next morning, planes from *Yorktown* swooped over the mountains of Guadalcanal, zoomed across the bay, and struck the ships while they were still at anchor. Three small ships were sunk, two others damaged. The rest upped anchor and headed for open water, where they were attacked by planes from *Lexington*. But Japanese forces had landed. They established a seaplane base on Gavutu and Tanambogo and, in the next few weeks, built up a supply of torpedoes, bombs, and small arms. Martin monitored their activity through his scouts from Guadalcanal, and reported by radio to intelligence officers in Australia.

Until this time, the Japanese had made no attempt to occupy the region in strength. On 8 June, however, they landed a small force in the Lunga area and began construction of a wharf. This was a different story. Guadalcanal had land suitable for airfields. Both sides knew even then that airpower was the key to everything, not only in the Solomons, but throughout the Pacific. Martin, gathering up his radio and as much personal gear as he and his police scouts could carry, left Aola and took off into the bush. In America, the First Marine Division was leaving North Carolina for six months of advanced training in New Zealand.

On 6 July, a twelve-ship Japanese convoy landed men and equipment at Lunga Point to begin construction of an airfield. The Japanese employed a few islanders, but the heavy work was done by a construction unit of about 2,400 of their own men. They lived off the land, eating whatever they could find. They dug up the islanders' gardens, killed their livestock, and generally made themselves unwelcome. Destroying the gardens was their big mistake. It antagonized the islanders more than anything the British had done. Martin soon had staunch support for whatever he wanted to do.

Martin was a civil officer, but he was also a first lieutenant in

the British Solomon Islands Defense Force. Forty men that he had trained now became capable spies. They went into the Japanese camp, sometimes even worked there for a few days, and brought back details of progress on the airfield. Like most islanders, they had difficulty with numbers. Anything over ten presented a problem. Martin, unable to see for himself, concluded that 3,400 troops and laborers were on the island. Our naval intelligence estimated 7,200. Fortunately for us, the actual numbers were lower than even Martin's estimate: 2,571 on Guadalcanal, 900 on Tulagi, Gavutu, and Tanambogo. We didn't know that until long after we had landed.

During July, the Japanese made rapid progress on the field. RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) pilots reported a runway measuring 3,800 feet long and 160 feet wide. Construction was proceeding from both ends toward the center. Our decision to land on Guadalcanal had already been made, but this rapid progress heightened the urgency of our mission. Toward the end of July, lights were rigged for night work. Our B-17 flying fortresses bombed the field with fair regularity, but their attacks were too light, too inaccurate to delay progress. By the middle of August, the field would probably be operational.

There had arrived on Guadalcanal a Japanese man named Ishimoto. He had been a carpenter and a shipwright on Tulagi for years and had visited nearby islands regularly. Nobody thought about it at the time, and nobody paid any attention when he left in the summer of 1940. Now he returned as a Japanese naval officer in charge of reconnaissance and intelligence. From his radio, he knew that information was flowing from Guadalcanal to Australia. He raided Aola, but Martin had already left and was roaming the jungle. Hounded by planes from the air and by troops on land, he and his scouts had paused only long enough to send and receive vital messages.

On 1 August, Martin arrived at Gold Ridge, a mining claim high in the hills with a fine view of the Lunga region. His food was almost gone, and the precious radio batteries were weak. On 4 August he radioed that he could no longer remain on the island. Australia gave him all the encouragement it dared: "It won't be long now."

Martin had no choice. Supplies were exhausted, and so was he. His radio was all but dead. The Japanese were closing in. On 6 Au-



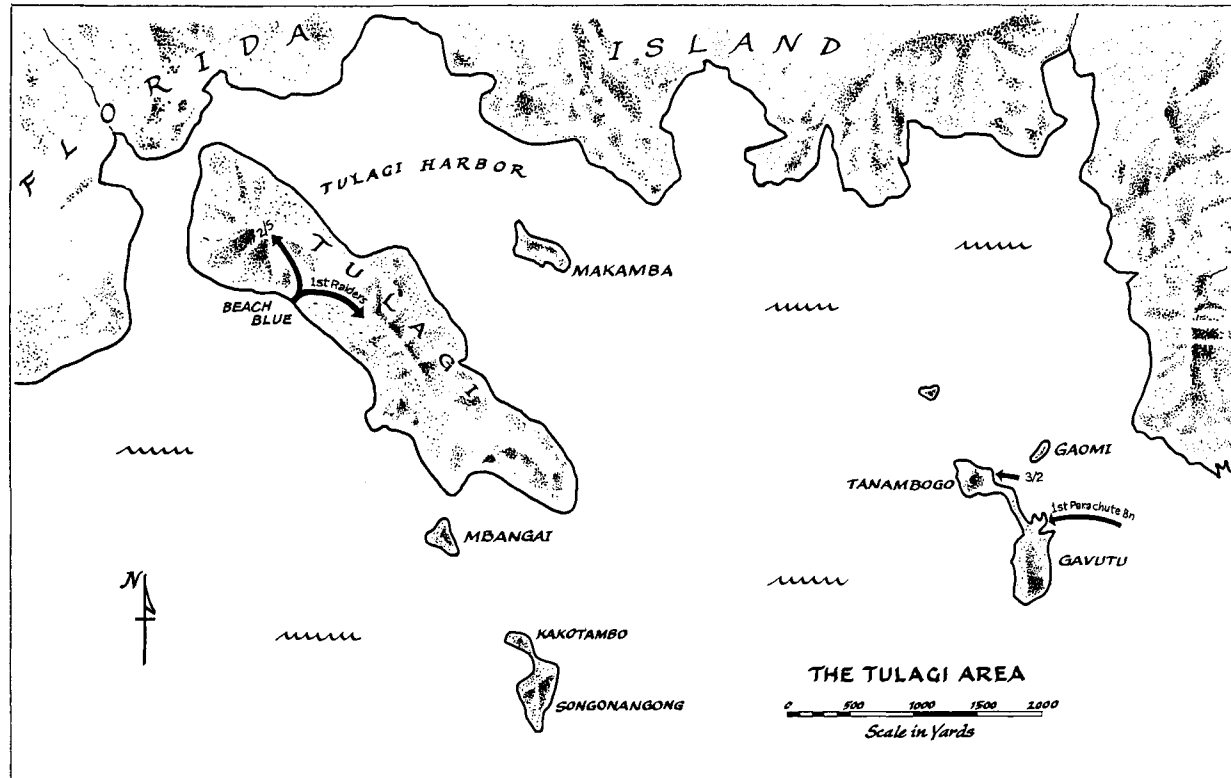
gust, he sat up all night sending final reports and preparing to escape as best he could. At 0600 on 7 August, he lay down for a nap. At 0615 he was awakened by the first bombardment of our landing. From his mountaintop perch he saw the bay covered with ships. Scores of planes roared overhead, and landing craft circled the transports. It was a landing, not a raid. His rescue was at hand. History had come to Guadalcanal.

## *The Early Days on Guadalcanal*

Our landing on Guadalcanal was unopposed, as related in chapter 1. The operation on Tulagi, Gavutu, and Tanambogo, however, was a desperate fight from start to finish. H-Hour on Tulagi was 0800 on 7 August. The Raider Battalion landed on Blue Beach, the far end of the island from main Japanese positions. Our naval bombardment surprised the garrison: They thought it was merely a shelling and rushed to their dugouts only to discover—too late—that we were landing. They rallied in defense, but by then the Raiders were ashore in force. The heaviest fighting raged near King George Playing Field. One of the few level places on the island, it was circled on three sides by steep hills. The Japanese were dug in there, using natural caves and sandbagged emplacements. Each pocket of resistance had to be destroyed separately. The Raiders incurred heavy casualties, a total of 22 percent. They were badly hurt, but gained control of the island by the end of the third day.

Gavutu was attacked by the paratroops, who landed by boat and met the fiercest resistance of all. Their landing area was swept by small-arms fire from both Gavutu and Tanambogo. Several men were killed before reaching shore. Heavy casualties, a staggering 55 percent, were suffered before the island was secured.

From Gavutu, the Marines attacked Tanambogo. The causeway that connected Tanambogo to Gavutu, five hundred feet long and twenty feet wide, was well covered by machine-gun fire. Cruiser *San Juan*, mounting sixteen five-inch guns, fired heavy broadsides, but the bombardment threw huge chunks of concrete into the path of the assault troops, forcing them to land on a far more exposed dock. At the end of the day, Tanambogo was still in enemy hands. The next



Tulagi, Florida, Tanambogo, and Gavutu Islands. Original artwork by Don Ellis.

morning, the Third Battalion Second Marines, part of the reserve, attacked across the causeway and helped finish the job. Heavy hand-to-hand fighting continued until the end.

In our first operation, we encountered a tactic of defense that was to prevail throughout the Pacific war. It was desperate, and always brought the same result: total casualty and loss of the island for the Japanese; heavy losses but ultimate success for the Marines.

On 9 August, the temporary command post (CP) on Guadalcanal was cool and pleasant. A light breeze rustled the palms, keeping away the mosquitoes. Colonel Goettge reviewed the operation up to that hour: On landing, the Fifth Marines, meeting no resistance, established positions to hold the beachhead. The First Marines moved through them as planned and pushed inland toward Grassy Knoll. But Grassy Knoll was farther away than anyone thought. We were still a long way from it at the end of the first day. In fact, we didn't take it until December. In the meantime it served as a Japanese observation post. (Some historians now suggest that the Grassy Knoll we were supposed to seize was not Mount Austen, but what was later known as Bloody Ridge, or Edson's Ridge, much closer to the airfield and more important strategically.)

The Fifth Marines had easier going along the beach, but didn't reach the airfield until the second day. Hindsight showed that they could have punched through in a few hours, but that first day nothing was certain. They found numerous buildings and a great deal of equipment but no Japanese. They did take a few prisoners, stragglers from the naval construction battalion working on the airfield. The prisoners were a sorry sight, emaciated, hollow-eyed, some barely able to walk. They expected to be shot, but we herded them into a barbed-wire enclosure, fed them, and treated their wounds and sores.

The night of 9 August was wild. Amphibious tractors, their lights blazing, roared back and forth through the groves. Occasionally, one missed the road in the dark and careened into the CP. Sentries were still jittery. Sporadic rifle fire cracked around us, and bullets zipped through the trees. Dead fronds fell from the palms with a swish like falling bombs. Just as things were quieting down, a herd of cattle stampeded through the area.



*(Above)* Aerial photo of Tulagi and Florida Islands on D-Day, 7 August 1942. USN photo.  
*(Below)* Gavutu Island dock where the Marines landed. Photographed on 26 October 1942. USMC photo by Thayer Soule.





Tanambogo Island, 26 October 1942. Some of the fiercest fighting took place on the causeway linking Tanambogo to Gavutu. USMC photo by Thayer Soule.

The morning of 10 August, Colonel Goettge and I made an extended jeep tour looking for picture possibilities, and for a place to install the reproduction equipment. Going west through the coco-nuts, we came to the first Japanese tent camp. It had housed perhaps two thousand people. Our attack had come while some were still asleep, others at an early breakfast. Rice was still on the tables, chopsticks on the floor. Suitcases and chests had been ransacked in a frantic search for articles that they would not leave behind. Nearby was a large dump of heavy machinery: pumps, drills, steamrollers, and machine tools, much of it only slightly damaged.

At the airfield, the Engineer Battalion was working on the runway, using Japanese steamrollers and trucks. Already there was sufficient length for light planes to land. On one side of the runway stood four hangars, plus what appeared to be a radar installation, and a small radio station. We climbed a low hill to the "pagoda." Major Moran (just promoted) objected to the term. It was not a pagoda, he



The pagoda served as air operations headquarters on Guadalcanal, 10 August 1942. USMC photo by Thayer Soule.

said, and bore no resemblance to one, but the roofline had an oriental touch. That made it a pagoda to the Marines. From there, we looked out over the field. In another week the Japanese could have had it operational, dominating the entire Solomons region, a possible base for an invasion of the New Hebrides, or even a drive against Australia.

Crossing the Lunga River on a bridge of coconut logs, we came to what had been the main Japanese camp. On our left was the powerhouse. Its windows were shattered and part of one side was blown away, but the machinery was intact, and running. Farther on were garages and repair shops. Our shells had smashed about sixty trucks, but the remainder were in good condition and already in service.

At a bend in the river, we found the actual headquarters, a large, well-built structure, open on all sides. The Fifth Marines had taken it for their regimental CP. Next door was a complete darkroom and a telephone exchange. The building was in wild disorder. Garments and trinkets covered the floor, and papers were scattered to the

breeze. The darkroom, however, was intact. I took it over for my Photo Section.

Storehouses were bulging with rice, fish, canned goods, beer, and sake. This last item was locked up by the quartermaster before it caused any trouble, but not before some experimentation. Upon finding the cases of ornately decorated bottles, one squad promptly tasted it and found it unpleasant but managed to get down a couple of glasses before an interpreter told them it was fly spray.

A large ice plant needed only minor repairs. The refrigerator was full of meat, but the Japanese had left the door open and the meat had spoiled. The odor carried a hundred yards. The largest of a block of fine wooden buildings became our hospital. In another building, we found two chests of Japanese currency later estimated to be worth over forty thousand dollars. I kept both chests under my desk for several weeks, then shipped them to Headquarters Marine Corps.

A new division CP was taking shape along a coral ridge at the edge of the airfield. The Intelligence Section erected a shelter of overlapping canvas strips, and placed beneath it a big Japanese mosquito net, making a room twelve feet square and eight feet high. For the floor, we used Japanese tatami mats, about six feet long and two feet wide, which we found in large quantities. In this tenuous shelter, officers and men of the section slept together. Everything was fine until it rained. Then the canvas sagged in the center, and puddles collected. After a few minutes, water started to drip between the strips, then trickle, then pour. It was most unsatisfactory, but we couldn't do anything about it for ten days.

The mess on the beach was slowly cleared, each unit retrieving its own gear. The chief difficulty was getting transportation. The Intelligence Section had only one jeep. We were able to borrow a truck occasionally, but even with the large amount of captured Japanese equipment there was a critical shortage. After a few hectic days, trucks were restricted to hauling only ammunition and rations, immobilizing everything else for a week. It was not until 17 August—ten days after the landing—that all equipment was moved off of Red Beach and west of the Tenaru River.

In the early days the weather was not hot. We swam in the river





The Fifth Marines bulletin board included a captured Japanese map, 13 August 1942. USMC photo by Thayer Soule.

behind the office. Evenings were cool, and at night a blanket was welcome. After sunset, we gathered around the colonel's shortwave radio for the news, direct from San Francisco. We were blacked out. People did smoke, however. On a captured Japanese map of our positions, we found one section near the airfield marked "place for smoking."

We shipped our first 35mm movie film to the States. There was no mail service. We found a wooden box slightly larger than we needed, put in the film, and, to prevent its rattling, stuffed in whatever we could: Japanese rubber shoes, water filter sets, newspapers, and other soft items. We burned the address into the top of the box and nailed down the lid. One of my movie men, Pvt. Richard Hance, got it onto a ship. (A year later, in the hallowed Marine Museum at Quantico, I found not only the box in which the shipment was received, but also all the stuffing material, carefully labeled and displayed.)

Construction of a more permanent CP was progressing. The tents and mess shack were set back under the trees, against the coral ridge. At first they were fairly well hidden, but tracks made by jeeps and trucks grew steadily more obvious. Later, even the tents showed from the air, but I doubt that the Japanese ever picked it out as the CP. No more bombs could have fallen there than actually did, so they may have known; but later, when it was within range of their artillery, not one shell dropped in the area.

The general and senior staff officers ate in a screened-in shack, but everyone in headquarters, from the general to privates, had the same food at the same times, 0730 and 1600. At first, only a few flies bothered us, but their numbers became steadily worse, in spite of that powerful Japanese spray of sad and recent memory. During the first week or so, we put our mess gear down where best we could and ate as rapidly as possible, before the flies could get our food. Later, the screened shack was enlarged, and all officers ate inside. The men had a separate galley down the line and battled flies the whole time. Captain Brown, division surgeon, personally sprayed the area each morning. As far as I could see, that was a major part of his duties. He wasn't interested in where garbage was dumped, or in the construction of latrines or other sanitary facilities. We had no discipline in these matters.

Parts of Lunga Point were now lined with barbed wire, but our positions were a mere speck seven miles long and four miles deep on an island ninety miles long and twenty-five miles wide. Whoever compared our area to Jones Beach in relation to Long Island was pretty close. The Japanese could land troops on either side of us and even move around behind us. Enemy ships prowled the channel, well out of range of our puny coast defense guns and their World War I ammunition. We met the daily air raids with feeble anti-aircraft fire. Land patrols to the east and south brought in a few more sickly prisoners, but encountered no sizeable force. The staff concluded that the enemy must have retreated to the west. Patrols in that direction on 10 and 11 August ran into stiff resistance at the Matanikau River, but they were not sure if that was main-line resistance or just a strong point. First Sergeant Steven Custer (a distant relative of the legend-



Col. Frank B. Goettge with captured Japanese currency on 11 August 1942. He was killed in action the following night. USMC photo by Thayer Soule.

ary general) organized a combat patrol to find out. Colonel Goettge decided to head it himself. It was a fatal mistake. That patrol became a major embarrassment to the Marine Corps, the subject of investigations, cover-ups and reports, the latest in 1987.

As division intelligence officer and a full colonel, Goettge's place was in headquarters, but ever since arriving on the island, he had been at the front or ahead of it. He was that kind of man. In Haiti, he had once been on continuous patrol for eighteen months, and he had made similar forays in Nicaragua and Santo Domingo. Only the general or chief of staff could order him to change his ways, and neither of them had the heart to do that. "Well, Frank," I heard the general say, "I'm not going to order you to stay here, but . . ."

The plan was to land from a boat beyond Point Cruz, spend the night, and work back to headquarters the next day. Why they planned to spend the night on the beach was never clear to me. I felt from the first that the colonel wanted to prove to himself and to the Japanese that Marines weren't afraid of anybody, least of all a bunch of little brown men who hid in the woods.

While the patrol was being planned, a cooperative Japanese sailor was taken prisoner. He said some of the men in the bush would surrender, if given the chance. The colonel, seeing the possibility of rounding up prisoners at small cost, asked him if he would come with the patrol to a place of the colonel's selection. The important point is that the party went where the colonel wanted to go, not where the sailor wanted to go, as has been reported. The patrol was not being led into a trap. The excursion was the colonel's idea. Sergeant Custer, taking no chances, planned to tie a rope around the sailor's neck and to lead him like a dog. The sailor agreed to everything, rope and all.

As finally organized, the patrol included some of the most valuable men in the division, most of whom had no good reason to go: Col. Frank Goettge, division intelligence officer; Comdr. Malcolm Pratt, regimental surgeon of the Fifth Marines; Capt. Wilfred Ringer, regimental intelligence officer of the Fifth Marines; 1st Lt. Ralph Cory, one of four interpreters, one of only two who could both read and write Japanese; 1st Sgt. Steven Custer of division intelligence; Cpl. Joseph Kashuba, one of my best lithographers and a scout of

some experience; Corporals Howard Benson and Joseph Spaulding, both of whom had considerable scouting experience; Pfc. John Delano, the best draftsman in the division; Pfc. Blane Walters; and several others, twenty-five in all. Only three would return.

The patrol set out on 12 August as planned, but an hour late, at 1700. At Kukum they had trouble getting a boat and didn't leave until well after 1800. They hadn't gone far when the colonel spotted a fire on shore and insisted on returning to Kukum to report it. With these delays, they didn't reach their landing point until after sunset. In the dark, the Higgins boat ran onto a reef. The coxswain gunned the motor for half an hour in an effort to back off, thus advertising their presence to anyone within three or four miles. Finally, the boat worked free and, after putting the men ashore, started back to Kukum. The patrol headed inland, Colonel Goettge in the lead. They had gone only a few yards when they were fired on. Colonel Goettge, hit in the head, was killed instantly. Sergeants Frank Few and Charles Arndt, directly behind him, charged the attackers, killed six of them, then, slightly wounded, returned to the beach.

Commander Pratt and Captain Ringer had been hit. The Japanese sailor was dead. Lieutenant Cory, wounded in the stomach, was in great pain and unable to move. Captain Ringer, next-senior line officer, assumed command and sent Sergeant Arndt back along the beach to Kukum for help. It is the consensus of the three survivors that most of the patrol could have escaped if they had run for it at that time, but partly because he had wounded to care for, Captain Ringer decided they would remain.

More shots spit from the jungle, and the Marines returned fire. Corporal Spaulding's submachine gun jammed, and the tracers blazed in the chamber. He threw the gun away. A short time later, Captain Ringer decided to send another runner to Kukum and chose Spaulding because he was unarmed. Even then most of the patrol might have escaped, but shortly afterward enemy reinforcements pinned the men on the beach. Every few minutes someone was hit. One man, hit in the back, moaned and screamed throughout the night. Lieutenant Cory died near morning. At 0500, Ringer, as a last desperate hope, sent back Sergeant Few. Few said afterward that as he looked back he saw the Japanese charge, "their swords flashing in the sun."

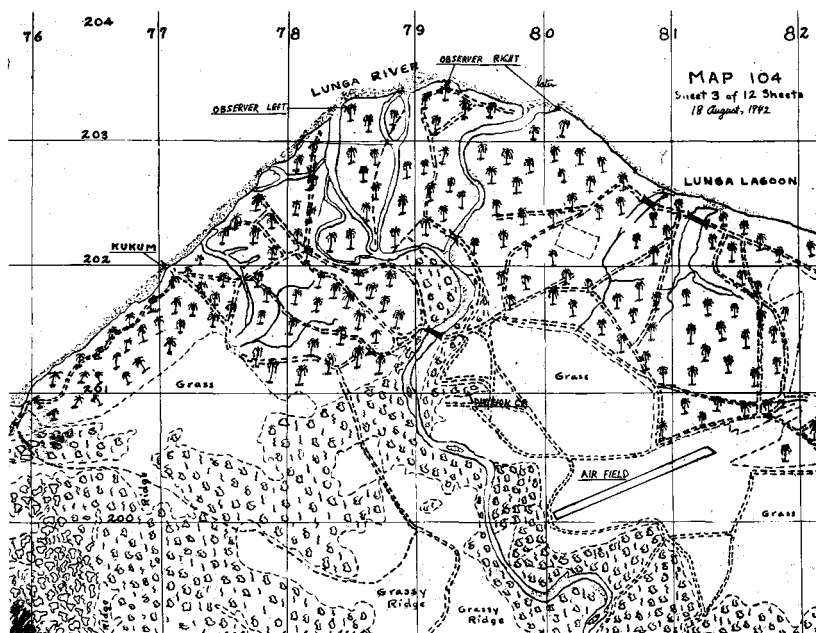
All three who left for Kukum arrived safely. They worked their way back to the water, swam a short distance, then ran and walked along the beach the six miles to Kukum.

Colonel Goettge had found the enemy in a place that wasn't safe for small groups until December. The patrol had been conceived in arrogance and ignorance. The result could have been expected. Even so, it was a rude shock to the staff and especially to the Intelligence Section. We had lost 30 percent of our personnel, including our colonel and our first sergeant. Until then, the war had been impersonal: shellings, bombings, a few skirmishes, and some straggling prisoners. Now it had come into our tent, to a shortwave radio that no longer had an owner, to an empty desk with a family photograph, to empty cots. We would never be the same. Neither would the division. From then on, every move was carefully evaluated, with no more rank-heavy beach parties.

On 14 August, Lt. Col. Edmund J. Buckley took over as division intelligence officer. He was to have begun his duties that day as assistant to Colonel Goettge but now became the staff officer. He went to work at once, bucking up our spirits and greatly improving our work. We never made up our loss in personnel. Five months later we were still shorthanded.

Ever since the landing, we had been deluged with false or inaccurate reports of friendly and enemy activity in the bay. Buckley, believing in direct contact, established two observation posts on the beach, manned with our own people. Observer Left, just west of the Lunga River, commanded the western coastline as far as Cape Esperance, plus Savo Island, Florida Island, Tulagi, and that part of the bay. Observer Right, in a small house on Lunga Lagoon, covered the eastern coast as far as Koli Point, across to Florida Island, and all the bay on that side. There was a slight overlap with Observer Left. Direct telephone lines linked the two and our office at the CP. We thus had direct contact with our own reliable men at two excellent positions on the beach. This was elementary, but no one had thought of it before.

Another direct wire went to DSIO, the district senior intelligence officer on Guadalcanal. An Australian, he supplied superb information on the movement of Japanese ships and planes. He was in



First map produced after our landing, 18 August 1942.

daily radio contact with our most remarkable source of information, the coastwatchers. That service had been established in 1939 by Lt. Comdr. Eric Feldt of the Australian Navy. By mid-1941, he had a picked group, mainly civilians, manning sixty-four stations throughout the Solomon Islands. Those men, doing what Martin Clemens did on Guadalcanal, were at Buka, Buin, New Georgia, and other places, usually within sight of Japanese bases. As an intelligence officer, I worked with all of them, but only by radio. They were continually hunted by the Japanese. As far as I know, none was ever caught, though some had narrow escapes.

Probably the most valuable to us was Donald Kennedy at ZGJ5 on New Georgia. His daily warning of "Bombers going yours" gave us forty-five minutes' notice of air raids. Before the installation of our radar, and even afterward, this warning was vital. It gave us time to get our planes into the air. Jack Read, at Buka, at the northern end of Bougainville, supplied similar information when planes took off



Observer Left in September 1942. USMC photo by Thayer Soule.



from there, or flew overhead on their way from Rabaul. His warnings gave us four hours' notice.

Others informed us of Japanese movements along The Slot, the wide channel between the major islands of the Solomons, stretching six hundred miles northwest to Rabaul. One coastwatcher gave us remarkable information about the Japanese base at Gizo. Through his scouts, he was able to tell us which buildings the Japanese were using, where their ammunition was stored, where their gasoline was buried, and when ships were in the bay. A few dispatches sounded like he was sitting on the dock watching all that took place. One went like this: "Japanese freighter *Yatsumo Maru*, 2,500 tons, arrived 1006, unloaded 65 cases small arms ammo, 80 cases artillery ammo, about 90 tons rations. Ammo in red house 50 yards north of pier. Rations under palms 200 yards north of pier. Four officers and 50 men debarked. Ship departed 1526."

On the basis of reports like that, we bombed Gizo so successfully that the Japanese abandoned it.

Buin, at the southern tip of Bougainville, was the principal Japanese naval base in the Solomons. Paul Mason sent us his report each morning: "Ships visible Buin 0800: one battleship *Kongo* class, three cruisers *Sendai* class, 14 destroyers all types, four transports 4,000 tons, two transports 6,000 tons."

And so on down the line, usually about thirty ships in all, though sometimes as many as fifty or sixty. At Rabaul, it was not uncommon for ninety ships to be in the harbor.

I knew the coastwatchers by name and voice but never met them. When I returned to Guadalcanal in 1965, I found Bill Bennett, with whom I had talked by radio every day for months. He had an impeccable British accent. I had never suspected that he was black, a native of the island.

Our debt to the coastwatchers was incalculable. Without their help and that of the islanders who worked with them, the campaign in the Solomons would have been much more difficult, perhaps impossible.

On 14 August, our own coastwatcher, Martin Clemens, arrived at the CP, bringing with him his personal scout, Michael; his dog, Sui-Nau; and a collapsible armchair that was the envy of everyone. One of the most charming men I ever met, he was extremely capable

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Martin Clemens and some of his scouts in August 1942. USMC photo by Thayer Soule.

and had a grand sense of humor. His stay with us for the remainder of the campaign brightened our days. His men of the Solomon Islands Defense Force came and went regularly through our lines, making scouting trips and guiding Marine patrols. They accompanied missions in our diesel launches and often served as interpreters.

We inherited from the British six diesel launches. Known as the Buckley Navy, they were invaluable for trips along the coast and to other islands. Later in the campaign, they received new names: USS *Ridiculous*, *Ludicrous*, and *Lascivious* in one squadron, USS *Sinkable*, *Vulnerable*, and *Reversible* in the other.

The first islander to offer us his assistance was Sgt. Maj. Jacob Vouza of the defense force. He came into our lines the second day and introduced himself to Colonel Goettge. Martin had not yet come down from the hills. The colonel suggested that Vouza find him and bring him back. Before he left, someone gave him a small American flag. On the way to his village, he was caught by Ishimoto, the ship-



Sgt. Maj. Jacob Vouza of the Solomon Islands Defense Force in August 1942. He was later decorated by both the United States and Great Britain, and knighted by King George VI. USMC photo by Thayer Soule.

wright of prewar days in Tulagi, now a Japanese intelligence agent. When Ishimoto found Vouza's flag, he questioned him about the strength of the American forces. Vouza's estimate would have been wildly inaccurate, but he refused to give any information. Ishimoto tied him to a tree, bayoneted him several times, once in the throat, and left him to die.

Ishimoto didn't know Sergeant Major Vouza. Regaining consciousness, Vouza worked free of his bonds and managed to half-crawl, half-walk twelve miles back to our lines. We rushed him to the hospital, where he lost consciousness. Doctors gave him massive transfusions and shots of everything in the book. Four hours later, Vouza was awake and demanding something to eat. After two weeks, he went back into the bush. There, with Martin's permission, he organized his own raider group of islanders. In the months that followed, he provided a lot of information and killed many Japanese, some in gruesome ways. For Sergeant Major Vouza, the war had become personal.

At the end of the operation, Vouza was made an honorary sergeant major in the U.S. Marine Corps. He received our Legion of Merit and Silver Star, as well as the British George Medal and the Order of the British Empire. He was knighted by King George VI.

When I returned to the island in 1965, I journeyed to his village to pay my respects to the Grand Old Man of Guadalcanal. He knew that I was coming. He had heard of my visit on the radio, and I had sent him a telegram. Local calls were free in Honiara, but there was no long-distance service. My message went by radio to Tetere, then by bicycle two miles to his village of Roroni. I signed it "Colonel Soule, U.S. Marine Corps." The British are impressed by rank and titles. When they learned that I was a lieutenant colonel, even though retired, I was introduced and referred to everywhere as "Colonel."

Vouza greeted me with great pride and pleasure. He had photographs of the old days (some of which I had taken) and an autographed, framed picture of Queen Elizabeth II. At her invitation, he had attended her coronation in 1958. Before I took his picture, he put on his ceremonial necklaces and took up his spear tipped with human bone ("*not* Japanese," he said).

When I had finished—he looked regal—he said that he would now dress up. He put on the business suit that he wore at the corona-

tion, complete with medals. He gathered his family around him, including two grandchildren, twins, nine months old. As I took a close-up picture of his medals, he said, "Do it from this side, so the American ones will show up well."

Vouza was head man of his village, Roroni. When he was in London, he was impressed with urban planning. On his return home, he laid out a wide main street and had the houses built in a line, with flower beds. He erected three churches and two schools. His was the nicest village on the island. We inspected it together, then had a picnic lunch under a great tree. When I turned to go, he shook my hand warmly. "Thank you for coming, Colonel," he said. "Give my love to all the Marines in America, and God bless you."

From 9 to 22 August, few American ships entered the bay. The airfield was the center of activity. With the runway completed and the hangars repaired, it was ready for our planes, but they didn't come. The Japanese did. Every day, six to twelve planes, too high for our antiaircraft fire to reach them, bombed our positions. The first two or three days our reaction was casual. Colonel Goettge stood outside with his field glasses, looking straight up. As the planes moved closer, he moved his head back farther and farther and gave a running report: "Now the bomb doors are opening. . . . Here come the bombs!"

It was several seconds before we could hear them and almost a minute before they hit. The planes were usually a little to one side or the other, but one day they were exactly overhead. We dived for cover and cowered as the great footsteps crashed closer and closer. One bomb hit only a few feet away, showering us with dirt. Up on the coral ridge, one onlooker was killed. Again the war was personal.

On 15 August, the enemy dropped red-and-white streamers and parachute drops for their troops. More than half of them fell in our area. The red-and-white streamers contained a map showing Red Beach and the airfield. An arrow pointed to a "broad place" where a cache of food was located. The drops were beautifully made wicker baskets, cushioned on the bottom to break the fall. Each was lined with rubber and contained 250 rounds of small-arms ammunition, canned meat, cigarettes, candy, and concentrated food. The most interesting item was a document in the top of each drop. Major Moran

translated it: “Friendly troops, the enemy before your eyes is collapsing. (loud laughter) A naval landing brigade is near. We are convinced of help from heaven and of divine guidance. Respect yourself. By no means run away from the encampment. We, too, will stick it out.”

Another paper, headed *The Great East Asia Newspaper, Special Edition*, reported the battle of Savo Island. It said that the Imperial Fleet had inflicted the following losses on the American force:

Sunk: One battleship, unknown type  
Two armored cruisers of the *Astoria* class  
Three cruisers, unknown type  
At least four destroyers  
At least ten transports

It also listed as “defeated” or “smashed up” two armored cruisers of the *Minneapolis* class, at least two destroyers, and one transport. It claimed thirty-two fighter planes and nine dive-bombers shot down. All this was a great exaggeration, but the truth was bad enough.

The curious thing about this parachute business was that it created the impression that there was danger of a parachute attack on the field. We parked trucks and other vehicles on the runway to prevent enemy landings. Tanks and jeeps were stationed around the edge. An entire battalion was assigned to deal with any troops who might land. The CP, on the edge of the field, was in an exposed position. We dug an emplacement for a 50-caliber gun, but at the last minute a tank was stationed there instead. Pistols were issued to those who wanted them. They were passed out in the dark, with no record of who took them or of the serial numbers. I kept mine until the end of the war.

One night, we thought a few Japanese were in the grass near the CP. We loaded all the guns we had, doused our lights, and spent most of the evening lying on the ground, waiting for something to happen. I took cover behind one of our safes. I felt secure with two steel walls in front of me, but later I saw a safe riddled by bullets. In the middle of the alert, with everyone expecting trouble, someone wandered down the path with a flashlight. Corporal Howard shouted, “Put out that light!”

No response.

Colonel Buckley, in an imperious tone, shouted, too, "Put out that light."

Still no response.

Howard, annoyed, shouted, "Did you hear what the colonel said? Put out that damned light!"

A voice near the light came calmly through the darkness: "This is Colonel James, chief of staff."

"Well goddammit, Colonel," came another voice, "put out that damned light." He did. The CP was quiet the rest of the night.

Not then or ever did the enemy penetrate that CP, but as a precaution we posted more guards and set up a system of passwords. The passwords had been distributed to all units since the beginning but were seldom used. Effective from noon one day to noon the next, they were selected by Major Moran because the Japanese would have difficulty pronouncing them, words like "Pearl Harbor," "Albuquerque," "Honolulu," "lollypop," and "hallelujah." They were often delayed in the message center and sometimes didn't reach forward units until a new one was in effect. Even when they got them, the men seldom remembered them or couldn't pronounce them: "Lilliputian. What the hell does *that* mean?"

The first few nights, sentries were too jittery to bother with formalities. Near the perimeter, you might hear, "What's the password?" . . . Bang! Three men coming in at dusk from outside the lines were halted some distance out. A sentry asked for the password, which was "hallelujah." One of the men shouted "hallelujah," but the sentry didn't hear and asked again. It was given again, but the sentry still didn't hear and opened fire. The three men advanced, keeping behind some trees, one of them shouting, "Hallelujah, goddammit, Hallelujah!"

Another time, a man, challenged in the dark, couldn't remember the word. "Honolulu," he yelled back.

"That was yesterday," cried the sentry.

"Well, lollypop."

"That's not it either."

After a brief silence, a slow southern drawl came from the darkness: "Oh, hell; go ahead and shoot."

The division was now firmly established on—and restricted to—Lunga Point. Our eastern boundary was the Tenaru River, our southern line an intermittent trail through the jungle. The western boundary was a line about halfway between Kukum and the Matanikau River. The beaches were sown with land mines and festooned with barbed wire. We saw no friendly ships or planes, except one PBY, the personal plane of Adm. John S. McCain, COMAIRSOPAC (Commander for Air in the South Pacific). It landed briefly on 12 August. The runway was a mess, but the admiral gamely declared it fit to receive planes. That day, the field was named Henderson Field, in honor of Maj. Lofton Henderson, USMC, killed in the Battle of Midway. It is still called that today but sometimes goes by the more grandiose title of Honiara International Airport. Beginning with that visit on 12 August, we were promised fighters day by day, but each evening the sun went down on an empty field.

On 20 August, word came that friendly planes were on the way. Racing them in our jeep, we arrived at the field just in time to film swarms of them coming in from the bay. Swooping low, they roared over our heads, swept over the jungle, screamed down at the runway, then zoomed up into the clouds. The island echoed with our cheers. Our planes had come at last!—only thirty-one, but in that joyful moment they seemed to darken the sky. That night we went to bed early and slept well. The fleet that had sailed away so long ago had not forgotten us after all. Our planes were here. Now, the story of Guadalcanal would be different. It was. Things got worse.



## 5

### *Tenaru, the Tokyo Express, and Bloody Ridge*

At 0200 on 21 August, things began to pop. I had just entered the Intelligence Section tent for my watch when heavy small-arms fire erupted in the east. Outposts of the First Marines on the far side of the Tenaru River heard people advancing toward them and had withdrawn to our lines on the west bank. Now rifle and machine-gun fire were coming from the east bank, and our troops were replying.

Two days before, Capt. Charles Brush had led a patrol down the beach to the east. Near Koli Point he encountered a large Japanese patrol of thirty-one men and several officers. In the firefight that ensued, all but five of the Japanese were killed. They had been laying communication wire from where they had landed and had two good radio sets. From the number of officers and the amount of communication gear, Brush knew it was an intelligence patrol, a warning of more action to come. This activity on the twenty-first was, therefore, not unexpected.

At 0430 the enemy attack intensified. Artillery, mortar, and small-arms fire roared, chattered, and snapped for three hours. When the sun came up, the firing increased. In spite of desperate charges, only a hundred Japanese were able to cross the sandbar at the mouth of the stream. All of them died. Our planes, flying their first combat mission, strafed those still alive on the east bank of the river and in boats just offshore.

At 0700, Col. Clifton B. Cates, commander of the First Marines, sent the First Battalion around and behind the Japanese to box them in on the point. By 1300 the entire enemy force was trapped. At

1500, after much delay, a platoon of our tanks rumbled across the sand spit. Moving through the coconuts, firing canister as they went, they crushed large numbers of Japanese. By 1700 the battle was over.

My photo team moved immediately onto the point. Two still photographers were with us, but Private Hance and I concentrated on motion pictures. Colonel Cates came with us. He said he had not seen a more terrible sight in all of World War I. The Japanese had dug in, but nothing could save them from our fire. Three hundred bodies were strewn on the beach, some of them as much as fifty yards on the left flank of our positions. Many were without heads or arms. Others had been blown into small pieces. Black flesh was everywhere, seared beyond recognition. As yet, there was no stench. Death was too recent.

We learned the next day that the attacking force was a reinforced battalion commanded by Col. Kiyoano Ichiki, a distinguished officer with a fine combat record in China and elsewhere. He had not told his men where they were, only that a small body of poorly trained troops opposed them. His plan was to proceed along the coast, destroy any opposing forces, and recapture the Japanese camp. From there, he would seize the airfield. He knew our defenses extended only a thousand yards inland from the beach. At the end of that line, it would be easy to cross the almost dry river and head directly for the airfield. Ichiki, however, confident of his own ability and contemptuous of his foe, moved straight along the coast and hit our positions at our strongest point. There, the Tenaru was a small lagoon with a sandbar at the beach. Proceeding across that narrow spit of land, he tried to storm our positions. On the west bank, the Second Battalion, First Marines, was dug in with machine guns and antitank guns. They received invaluable assistance from our artillery, which fired hundreds of 75mm rounds. Much of that fire was during the night, using concentrations calculated only hours before.

Of the Japanese force, about 80 escaped and 777 lay dead. Only two had been taken prisoner. We suffered 125 casualties, 44 killed and 71 wounded. We had proved ourselves in battle. The Japanese paid dearly for poor intelligence, poor planning, and arrogance. Colonel Ichiki committed suicide.

The next morning, we took more pictures and made a detailed

check of Japanese materiel. By now the stench was unbearable. We filmed prisoners, many of them Korean laborers that we had captured earlier, helping to clean up. They had no love for the Japanese. While bulldozers dug long trenches, they stacked bodies on both sides. They laughed and joked as they went about their grim work. Some even pissed on the mass graves.

From the beginning of the war, nearly all senior Marine officers distrusted photography. They appreciated our maps and aerial photographs but feared that some of our other pictures might make someone look bad. A few had seen General Harrington scrutinize field film in Quantico and knew what that could mean. As I finished my motion picture work at Tenaru, Colonel James, chief of staff, asked me for the film! Tenaru was our first land battle. I had the first pictures of enemy dead. Now the chief of staff ordered me to surrender the film! "Too graphic," he said. I handed him two unexposed rolls and sent the exposed footage to Headquarters Marine Corps, as I was supposed to do. When those films reached the States, headquarters released them to the newsreels. They were shown in theaters without a single cut. To my knowledge, that had never been done before.

Tenaru was a victory for us, but now we knew that the Japanese planned a serious effort to retake the airfield. We reinforced our positions, building a tank barrier of coconut logs at the mouth of the Tenaru, and stringing more barbed wire at main defensive points. We improved transportation and communication within the perimeter. That was all we could do. Everything was in short supply. One evening, thirty-seven planes, unable because of bad weather to return to their carrier, *Saratoga*, landed at the field. They were a heartening sight, but they needed fuel, one of the scarcest items of all. We found enough to get them back to their ship, and watched their departure with mixed feelings.

By September we had some combat prisoners. Before Guadalcanal, the Japanese were a mystery. Now we could talk to about forty men—no officers—who had arrived on the island after we landed. They didn't know where they were; some thought they were in the United States. Like all Japanese military personnel, they were expected to die rather than surrender. They didn't realize the importance of information that they might disclose if they were cap-

tured. Major Moran sat down with them, talked about anything at all for a few minutes, then got all the information he wanted, or at least all they had. Many said that they expected to be killed when captured. A few asked for knives so they could commit suicide but were happy when we didn't oblige them. One man found almost dead of starvation told Major Moran that he had wanted to commit suicide but didn't because he was too hungry. They didn't want us to notify their families. By giving up, they had disgraced themselves and their ancestors. We of the Intelligence Section wanted more prisoners, but Marines seldom risked their necks to take a Japanese soldier alive.

Major Moran learned a great deal from interviews and from captured Japanese documents. We were, therefore, ordered to destroy all our personal notes and diaries. I had detailed notes, and was in the third year of a five-year diary. Colonel Buckley understood my reluctance to destroy them and offered to put them in the Intelligence Section safe. "We have a lot more important stuff than that in there," he said. "We'll put yours in, too. If it comes to that, we'll burn the whole business."

It didn't come to that. A year after the war, I received a large envelope from Headquarters Marine Corps. It contained my diary and the detailed notes, still smelling of the jungle. Even now, half a century later, that musty odor lingers.

Most of the Japanese troops on Guadalcanal were originally well equipped and would have been better so if they had succeeded in unloading all their supplies. The same could be said for us. Japanese equipment was made as well as was necessary: the precision parts were beautifully finished; the others were made well enough to pass. Many of their weapons lacked the solid, well-balanced feel of American equipment. Some were heavy and outmoded, but they worked only too well. Moreover, they were operated by tough men determined to stay, to fight, and to win.

The Japanese seldom presented the kind of target we expected. All too often, a rifle cracked or a machine gun chattered without betraying its location. The Marines considered this "a hell of a sneaky way to fight." We were all for slugging it out in full daylight. "Why don't the bastards come out where we can see them and fight like men?" This was our most frequent complaint. When they did come

out, it was usually at night, when we were ill at ease. In the dark, they could see no better than we could and were just as easily confused. With the advantage of being in defense, and with a lot of guts, we won every time.

One of the minor mysteries of the campaign was some glass balls about three inches in diameter. They contained a clear liquid with what looked like flecks of copper floating in it. We invented all kinds of explanations, including a suggestion that they were “cyanide bombs.” Nobody knew what a cyanide bomb was, but it sounded sinister indeed. Major Moran contended that they were floats for fish nets. We sent some out for study but never heard anything.

There have been vast changes in warfare since the early days of World War II, but at that time the quality of our equipment was second to none. Our chief problem was that only 30 percent of what we brought had been landed, and we were at the end of the longest, most tenuous supply line in history. Our situation degenerated from poor to desperate, especially in food, mortar shells, grenades, barbed wire, and gasoline.

Some of our supply problems occurred on the island. Our tiny port of Kukum had no dock and only a few landing barges. As late as October, ships were seldom able to complete unloading before departing. When a ship left in the late afternoon—it wasn’t safe to stay overnight—it might not return for days or even weeks. *Fomalhaut* made four trips before cargo at the bottom of her hold was put ashore. Even in daylight, ships were not safe. Torpedoes narrowly missed *Fomalhaut*, and hit *Alchiba*. Enemy planes were a constant menace. Even when no damage resulted, attacks slowed or stopped unloading for hours.

On 13 October, operations at Kukum were disrupted for the first time by Japanese artillery fire. It took us two weeks to locate and silence the battery. Unloading was transferred to Red Beach, which was out of range. A few days later, however, shells from a heavier gun began falling there. For about ten days it wasn’t safe to unload at all. Priority cargo was put ashore in Tulagi.

The Tulagi Navy consisted of a seagoing tug, some barges, and two YP boats (old commercial tuna-fishing boats). Their ferry service between Tulagi and Guadalcanal was interrupted several times

by enemy action, but Tulagi was never bombed or seriously shelled. It would have been a good target. Supplies were piled high on its docks for weeks at a time.

Many of our supply difficulties occurred in Noumea, New Caledonia, where most ships were loaded for the trip to the island. A prewar survey had found that the port could service only twenty-four ships per month. Seabees and Army engineers worked frantically, but improvements were slow in coming. Often as many as sixty ships were waiting to be unloaded. At one point, eighty-six were anchored there.

Supply difficulties ran all the way back to San Francisco, where knowledge of conditions at Noumea and the Solomons was almost nonexistent. Take the saga of the torpedo boats: Motor torpedo boats were scheduled to reach us shortly after we landed, but they didn't leave San Francisco until September. Seventy feet long and weighing fifty tons each, they were too small to make the trip under their own power, yet too big to go into the hold of a ship. They were lifted aboard by powerful dock cranes and sent as deck cargo.

The ships sailed down to Noumea without incident but then encountered a problem. Nowhere within a thousand miles was there a crane big enough to lift the boats. Should the ships go on to Auckland, which had big cranes? Or should equipment be constructed at Noumea? There was even talk of sinking the ships and letting the boats float off. Finally, the Seabees rigged a crane and got them off.

Even that was not the end. The boats had the wrong propellers. Instead of making forty-five knots, they did about twenty-five. On their way up to Guadalcanal they made only six knots, partly because they couldn't carry enough fuel to make the journey at a higher speed. Urgent messages flashed to the States, and correct propellers were flown out. Properly equipped, four of the boats saw their first action on 13 October, nine weeks late. If they had come earlier, we would have been spared many weary nights of shelling from the sea.

Even while the Guadalcanal operation was being planned, intelligence officers whom I knew were convinced that our attack would provoke major naval action. If we could hold the airfield, the Japanese would be forced to withdraw from the Solomons, and abandon

their plans for a drive on the New Hebrides and Australia. If the Japanese won the naval clash, we on the island were doomed.

My perspective of the campaign was unusual. As an intelligence officer, I saw some of the big picture. I met all of the visiting brass and knew the grim details of our situation. When on telephone watch, I was directly involved in many crucial moments. At the same time, I was responsible for the production of our maps and all photography on the island. My principal photographic tasks were to make detailed records of the terrain, our positions, and enemy equipment, and to record as much as possible of combat. With much of the action at night and with only two movie men, we couldn't do as much as we wanted, but we did get some dramatic footage in 35mm black and white. The best was released by Headquarters Marine Corps to the newsreels. The rest was used in training films. All of our close-combat footage, shot in 16mm color, was lost in shipment somewhere between Guadalcanal and Washington.

Most of my time and effort was devoted to producing maps. At that stage of the war, aerial photographs were hard to get. Our maps were neither accurate nor complete, but they were the best we could produce with the information and equipment on hand. Enemy attacks often slowed or stopped our work. The darkroom and map department were never hit, but my living tent was blown up twice, the office tent once. I lost 30 percent of my men and had several narrow escapes myself, one by less than two inches.

We held the airfield, but our success could be sustained only if we were promptly and massively reinforced and resupplied. That could be done only by sea but was not being done. The Japanese were so weakened by their losses at Midway and in the Coral Sea that they couldn't reinforce their troops, at least not on a scale that would tip the balance. Either side could muster enough strength to dominate the situation briefly—a matter of hours—but never long enough or powerfully enough to force a decision. Both sides were pouring in everything they had. Both were taking heavy losses. Neither could retreat or advance. Guadalcanal became, as the Japanese so neatly put it, “a meat grinder.” New tactics were called for.

The Japanese came up with naval infiltration. Our planes had forced them to abandon daylight operations and even the use of trans-

ports. Now they would travel only at night in small, fast warships. Night after night, they unloaded troops from destroyers and light cruisers. We estimated that 150 men landed from each destroyer, as many as 400 from a cruiser. To escape our air attacks, the ships had to be well away from the island by dawn. Sometimes they swept in close to the beach, dumped off supplies in watertight barrels, and headed back to sea. Troops scrambled down rope ladders and got ashore as best they could, often leaving important equipment and supplies on board. Our observation posts heard the sound of engines and sometimes saw distant lights, but there was nothing we could do. That was a job for our navy, and right then the Navy couldn't handle it.

As our airpower grew, the Japanese switched to flotillas of landing barges coming all the way from Buin, more than three hundred miles to the northwest. They took a week to make the trip, spending daylight hours in well-sheltered harbors such as Viru. We named these night landings the "Tokyo Express" or "Cactus Express." Cactus was the code name for Guadalcanal. At the height of it, Maj. Gen. Roy Geiger, commander of the First Marine Air Wing, called a conference, which I attended. Geiger wanted more direct intelligence. He made a suggestion that startled everyone:

"Let's send up a plane and take flash pictures of the landings. They could be developed right away. We'd know where they were and could respond at once."

We sat in stunned silence. It was a crazy idea. Anyway, no technology existed for flash pictures on that scale. I happened to know that Dr. Harold Edgerton was working on it at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but it wouldn't be available for years. Maj. Michael Sampas, Geiger's intelligence officer, looked straight at me, but his face was blank. I was trying to decide how to be as polite as possible, when Mike saved me.

"General," he said, "that is pure, unadulterated horseshit!"

We gasped in relief and astonishment. Geiger, taken aback, said, "Now, Mike, simmer down. It was only an idea."

That was the end of it.

During all this time, our navy was waiting for reinforcements. Adm. Robert Ghormley, COMSOPAC (Commander, South Pacific), was aware of enemy activity but couldn't—or wouldn't—do much



about it. Some said he was not sufficiently aggressive. It was well known that he had been pessimistic from the start. His nightly warnings that enemy landings would take place ended with "There will be no friendly ships in your area tonight." We could, therefore, fire at anything that moved on the water, but we were unable to take offensive action. The landings were far beyond the range of our artillery. Planes seldom operated from Henderson Field after dark. On land, we could ill afford to send expeditions into hostile territory twenty or thirty miles down the coast .

The climax of this infiltration was the landing of several hundred men at Tasimboko, about twenty miles east of our positions. To smash that force before it could become effective, the First Raider Battalion went there and had one of the luckiest breaks of the campaign. As the Raiders landed, an American convoy of three destroyers and two transports passed through the strait behind them. The Japanese, thinking a large force was landing, fled into the jungle, leaving behind much of their supplies and equipment. The beach was strewn with life jackets, packs, rifles, and personal gear, plus several field guns, a radio transmitter, and stores of medicine, ammunition, and food. The Raiders destroyed or damaged practically everything, lamenting that they couldn't bring it back to camp. They put a crimp in Japanese plans, but we were still in for plenty of trouble.

The defense of Lunga Point was based on the expectation that if an attack came, it would be against the beach, either frontally or on the flanks. The Japanese had tried that twice without success, and the staff expected them to try again. Our rear was considered safe, although the Japanese were cutting trails there. In September, the division CP was moved from the airfield to a ridge behind it, close to the rear of our perimeter. General Vandegrift said that he wanted "to get some sleep." To most of us, that Ridge CP was a mystery. We didn't see how it was an improvement on our old one. It was far from other outfits, some distance from the airfield, and even farther from Kukum. There was no water. It was outside the usual target area for air raids, but mosquitoes, perhaps more deadly than planes, were present in force. It was surrounded by such dense jungle that the enemy could infiltrate practically to the general's house, and almost did so a few

days later. In spite of this, large areas were cleared under the trees, a house was built for the general, water was piped in, and tent decks were installed. With grumbling from all concerned, we moved in on 11 September. The Raider and Parachute Battalions, both considerably shot up, were stationed on a ridge a few hundred yards behind us. Col. Merritt Edson, commander of the Raiders, had misgivings. To him, that ridge looked like a good approach to the airfield by an enemy force coming from the south.

That same day, 11 September, Admiral Turner and Admiral McCain flew in for a conference with General Vandegrift. The meeting was grim. The Japanese were preparing a major attack that the Navy felt unable to stop. The next day, forty enemy planes hit the airfield and plastered the area behind the CP. That night, heavy naval gunfire pounded our positions. Shells screamed over our heads—far back though we were—and crashed behind us. A few hours later, the Japanese launched an assault against the Raiders and the Parachute Battalion. They came from the south, as Edson thought they might. One of Edson's forward platoons was cut off but managed to fight its way back to the main line. All units then pulled back to a more defensible position, a high point on the ridge some two hundred yards south of us at the division CP.

The main attack came the next night, 13 September. At 2230, I was on telephone watch when the Japanese struck along the top of the ridge and, at the same time, up the steep slope of the hill where the Raiders were dug in. They tried everything they had: heavy small-arms fire, grenades, mortars, even piercing screams. They released smoke, trying to create the impression of a gas attack. Three times they charged the hill. The Raiders, though heavily outnumbered, held.

The Japanese had no artillery. Colonel Edson may have been reaping the benefit of his raid on Tasimboko, where he destroyed four or five pieces. But *we* had artillery. Our 105mm howitzers fired all night, by far the heaviest barrage to date, two thousand rounds. Forward observers placed the fire with devastating effect. As the enemy neared the Raiders' position, our artillery fire advanced with them. In the deep hollow below the Raiders' hill, it inflicted the heaviest casualties, about three hundred killed. We tried to advance the fire even farther, but one shell hit a tree just above us. No more of



*(Above)* Bloody Ridge from the south on 15 September 1942. Edson's Knob is the high point on the left, held by the Marines. Japanese forces attacked up the slope in front of it, and from the left. USMC photo by Thayer Soule. *(Below)* From Bloody Ridge, looking north toward the airfield on 15 September 1942. USMC photo by Thayer Soule.



that! For a time, when the wire to the front was blown out, a liaison man, Private First Class Watson of the Eleventh Marines, came back to division and directed fire from there. In the dark, both the general and Colonel James assumed that he was at least a captain. When the sun came up, they learned the truth and made him a second lieutenant on the spot.

My line to Colonel Edson was open during the entire battle. He called twice for more ammunition, especially grenades. He never doubted his ability to hold, but he was in a desperate situation. After every heavy burst of fire, Colonel Buckley would say, "Ask him what's going on."

At first, Edson was quite civil, but finally, after a particularly urgent request for information, he growled, "Tell Buckley if he wants to see what's going on, he can come up here himself. It's only two hundred yards!"

Our artillery and the resistance of the Raiders, battle-weary and outnumbered though they were, proved too much for the Japanese. Their few remaining men withdrew in disorder. With daylight, however, Japanese rifles began cracking around us in the CP. Men not on telephone watch or other vital work rushed to defend the area. We were pinned down all morning, crawling from place to place while bullets zipped through the trees. I had my narrowest escape of the war when I took up a position behind a thick steel plate upright in the ground. For one Japanese, however, I was in front of it. Whang! A bullet crashed into the steel! The noise alone petrified me. The bullet missed my nose by less than two inches. Bits of lead splattered my jacket. I dropped flat and waited. Nothing more, but that was enough.

About 1030, patrols flushed three Japanese, one officer and two men, from bushes at the edge of the CP. They ran through the tents, killing Platoon Sergeant Howell Beasley as they went. The officer sliced him with his sword, then headed straight for the general's house. Gunner Banta was reprimanding one of our men about something. He whipped out his pistol and dropped one of the Japanese only fifty feet from the general's door. Another fell even closer. The third made it to the woods on the far side but was shot there. Hardly missing a breath, Gunner Banta returned to the business at hand.

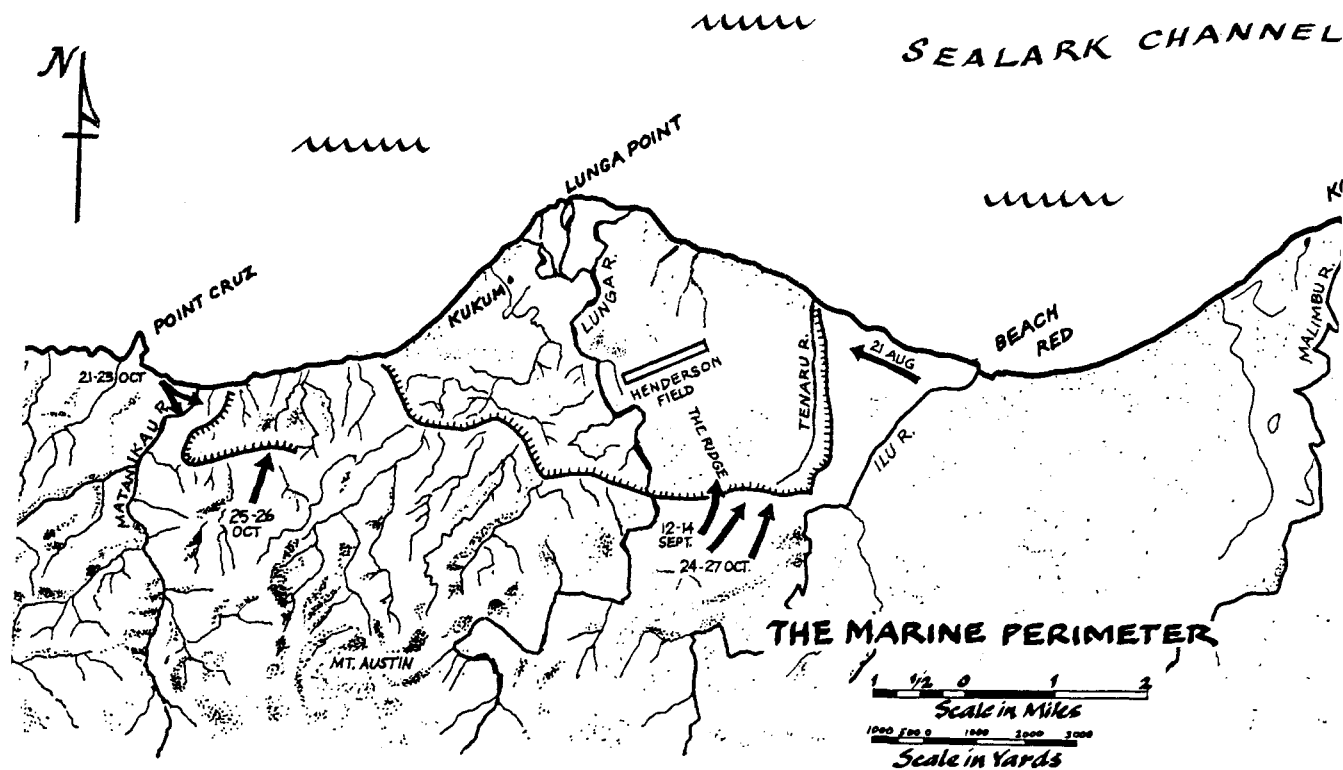
About eight hundred Japanese died in what became known as



From left to right, Lt. Gen. Thomas Holcomb, Col. Merritt Edson, and Maj. Gen. Archer A. Vandegrift on Bloody Ridge on 15 September 1942. USMC photo by Thayer Soule.

the Battle of Bloody Ridge. Our Raiders and paratroops suffered fifty-nine killed and two hundred wounded. The Japanese had grossly underestimated our strength and the difficulty of the terrain. They were unable to coordinate their attack. Our victory was decisive. Edson and his men, heroes all, saved the day, the airfield, and possibly the campaign. The position they held so valiantly was named Edson's Ridge, or Bloody Ridge, and remains so to this day. Colonel Edson received the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The Ridge CP, now in even more disfavor than before, was abandoned. We returned to the old one at the airfield, fixing it up as best we could.



Marine perimeter around Lunga Point, August-October 1942. (Original artwork by Don Ellis).

## 6

### *Lunga Life, the Air Raids, and Naval Bombardment*

After the Battle of Bloody Ridge (Edson's Ridge), the battered Japanese withdrew into the jungle, and life settled down for a while. Patrols reported no land activity. Air raids were sporadic for weeks, none at all for twelve days. The Japanese were preparing their next thrust.

Headquarters began to dig in. Regiments and smaller units had done so long before, but now, at last, division got to work. The Engineers cut into the coral ridge with pneumatic drills to construct an operations dugout twenty feet square and ten feet high, the first on the island in which a man could stand erect. Built to hold eight or ten men, it was often crowded with fifteen or twenty. The side not formed by the ridge was a wall of sandbags. The roof was coconut logs and sandbags. Smaller shelters were built for other staff sections, but as usual they didn't get around to us.

Giving up on the Engineers, Martin put Tavasui, one of his scouts, to work. In three days he completed a large excavation that we covered with twelve-inch coconut logs, half-inch steel plates, and two layers of sandbags. That, the Engineers assured us, would withstand a direct hit by a one-hundred-pound bomb. Inside, we had boxes to sit on, electric lights, a flashlight for emergencies, and one telephone. Our special phones to the observation posts, etc., remained in the office tent.

In regimental areas, where no defilade was available, individual foxholes were common. They were about two feet across and varied in depth from two to seven feet, depending on how ambitious the

occupant was, how worried he was, how tall, whether he preferred to stand or sit, and how far down he could dig before hitting water. Slit trenches were just long enough for the occupant to lie down and just deep enough to keep him below the level of the ground. They offered no protection against air bursts.

Life fell into a pattern. We got up at dawn. Michael or Allen (both police scouts) had a fine pot of tea ready, and usually some fresh papaya or pineapple. At 0700 we walked down the line for breakfast in our screened mess hall. We usually had canned fruit and sometimes a breakfast cereal. Shipments of Rice Krispies and Corn Flakes arrived regularly. We lacked many vital things, but Rice Krispies and Corn Flakes made it every time. On good days we enjoyed powdered eggs, pancakes, French toast, or Spam. There was no formal noon meal. That was air raid time. Snacks were available: bread or crackers with jam, cocoa, iced tea, or lemonade.

Supper, the main meal, was at 1600. We ate in style. Putting away our mess gear and navy trays, we sat at a fully set table. Large dinner plates and flatware came from ships, whether legally or not, I don't know. They bore such inscriptions as "Grace Line" or "USS So and So." Sometimes we had corned beef or Spam, a vegetable, and dehydrated potatoes. When the bakery was working, there was good bread. Once or twice we even had dessert. Everyone lost weight, but that was due partly to lack of sleep, nervous tension, and the heat. Two events stand out. One was the fabulous evening when we had frozen strawberries, flown in from a nearby carrier. The other was Thanksgiving dinner. It came a day late but with all the fixings: roast turkey, stuffing, sweet potatoes, and creamed onions. Because it was so different from our usual fare, I remember it as about the best Thanksgiving dinner I ever had. Certainly none was more welcome.

The headquarters mess of the Fifth Marines was reputedly the best on the island. Sgt. Juan Morrero, of Puerto Rico, the cook, provided such wonders as rolls, hot biscuits, special soups, and really cold lemonade. I never drank anything quite so frigid as that lemonade! He often served fruits and vegetables, baked or sweet potatoes, and other unexpected delicacies. His stove was fashioned from a Japanese safe. Juan, however, was the traditionally temperamental chef. The colonel put up with him for some time, even after he



threw a meat cleaver at one of the men, but finally Juan became so difficult that he had to be sent home. Sgt. Butch Morgan took over temporarily.

In spite of his short stature, Butch was imposing, with a big mop of unruly black hair and a full beard. He was a master at working with what he had or doing without, if it came to that. Though he too was temperamental, he never threw a meat cleaver at anybody. His voice was like a foghorn and carried just as far, intimidating at fifty yards. His vocabulary of disapproval was awesome, and he used it often. He was, in short, one of the characters of the island.

One day I was detailed to show a visiting admiral the sights. Naturally, I included Butch at lunchtime. I thought that I should warn him that we were coming, but Colonel Buckley, who knew Butch well, said no. "Don't tell him you're coming," he said. "He might say no. He's done it before."

So, with no warning, we dropped in on Butch's mess. He was cordial, seated us at a table, and went to work. After a few minutes, he brought a tasty hot Spam loaf, canned green beans, fresh biscuits, and ice-cold lemonade. The admiral was impressed. "Sergeant," he glowed, "that's the best food in the South Pacific."

Butch snorted. "Don't shit me, Admiral. It's only chow, and it ain't that good."

The admiral managed to keep a straight face until we were in the jeep and out of earshot. Then he laughed all the way back to the airfield. "That sergeant," he cried, wiping his eyes, "is a real character. We don't have people like that in the Navy."

An admiral isn't likely to encounter such people in full flower, so to speak, but they're there.

Our drinking water came from the Lunga River, a swift stream flowing from the mountains. Planters who had lived on the island assured us that it was safe to drink. At first we drank straight from the stream, but later we added a chlorination plant. It was difficult to supply water to forward units. Patrols out for two or three days drank from any stream they found, with resultant diarrhea and even a few cases of dysentery, but no hepatitis or typhoid fever. Later, we took more care to see that water was used wisely and that it was safe. Lister bags kept it pleasantly cool.



Sgt. Butch Morgan (left) and his stove. USMC photo.

The post exchange was not a department store. For the first four weeks it offered nothing at all, but as ships started to come in, the officer-in-charge gradually accumulated a supply of soap, razor blades, and cigarettes, all of which he gave away, along with toothbrushes and other necessities. On the first of October he took over a small house and set up shop. His stock consisted principally of things he had been giving away, plus writing paper and a large supply of much-needed envelopes. He had odds and ends, too: shoelaces, small amounts of candy, and so on.

In mid-October, a post office opened. It had a small canceling machine, sold airmail stamps, and, toward the end of our stay, accepted insured parcels and even registered mail. Mail was the most welcome item on the island. It came in big batches, often weeks apart. I got from ten to forty letters at a time. Our first mail arrived in September, four months after the forward echelon left the States. After that it came more rapidly, but never in less than two weeks. Practically all outgoing mail left by plane. Some arrived that way, but most arrived by ship. V-mail, government-sponsored photographic letters, didn't appear until December.

Censorship was vexing. General Vandegrift permitted us to write home and say that we were on Guadalcanal. The Navy discovered it in mid-November and ordered us to stop. Colonel Buckley became so annoyed with the whole business that he passed practically anything, provided that it had been released on the radio or in the press or that it was a personal experience that didn't disclose any deep, dark military secrets.

One day, Warrant Officer George Jones, division paymaster, came all the way from the rear echelon in New Zealand. He carried a black bag filled with money. Going from unit to unit, he paid up to a hundred dollars to anyone who wanted it but found few takers. We had no use for money. After two frustrating days, he flew back to New Zealand, his bag still almost full.

During October, I spent some time at Observer Left. There wasn't much there, just a shack the men had built of crates and boxes. We had a direct telephone to G-2 but little information to pass on. At that time there was almost no daylight activity. The bay was a silent world of sunlight and water, sky and palms. Inland, on our left, rose green

and purple mountains. At twilight, the palms bent low over the beach, and Tulagi was just a tip above the northern horizon. The sun dropped huge and round and red into the channel. Behind us, in the jungle, darkness brought terror. We huddled in our holes with water to our knees and mosquitoes in our ears. We waited for the moon, for morning, for even a sliver of light. On the beach, we looked out on the bay, tranquil and empty. The stars were brilliant in the black sky, and Venus was bright as a new moon.

Air raids struck almost daily. During our stay of 124 days, there were about ninety full-scale daylight attacks, plus many smaller ones and numberless alarms. The daylight raids varied from four to thirty bombers escorted by ten to thirty fighters. The bombers were based at Rabaul, six hundred miles to the northwest. From there to Guadalcanal and back was a twelve-hour round-trip, the outer limit of their range. They took off at dawn, flew down to Guadalcanal, made one run over the field, and flew back. The lucky ones returned to base by sunset. This accounted for their strict schedule. For weeks they arrived at 1145.

Even when ships were in the bay, our airfield was the target. This made no sense at all. The first week, when supplies and equipment were piled high along the water's edge, a solid plastering of that area could have been disastrous. But no. Each time, the planes flew directly over the field, dropped their bombs, and left.

On warning of a raid, Condition Yellow was announced. Our planes took off, fighters to gain altitude, bombers to avoid being caught on the ground. For most units, this was the first indication that a raid was coming. Ten or fifteen minutes before the raid was due, Condition Red was announced. All units sounded alarms—sirens, bells, horns, gongs, anything that made a noise. Most of the time we had ample warning, but once in a while the first word that attackers were overhead was the quick booming of the 90mm antiaircraft guns. Even then, there was plenty of time to watch the shallow V of silver planes move across the cloudless sky, one of the most terrifying yet most beautiful sights I ever saw. The Japanese respected our antiaircraft fire and kept well above it, at twenty thousand feet.

In those high-altitude attacks, we could hear the swish of fall-

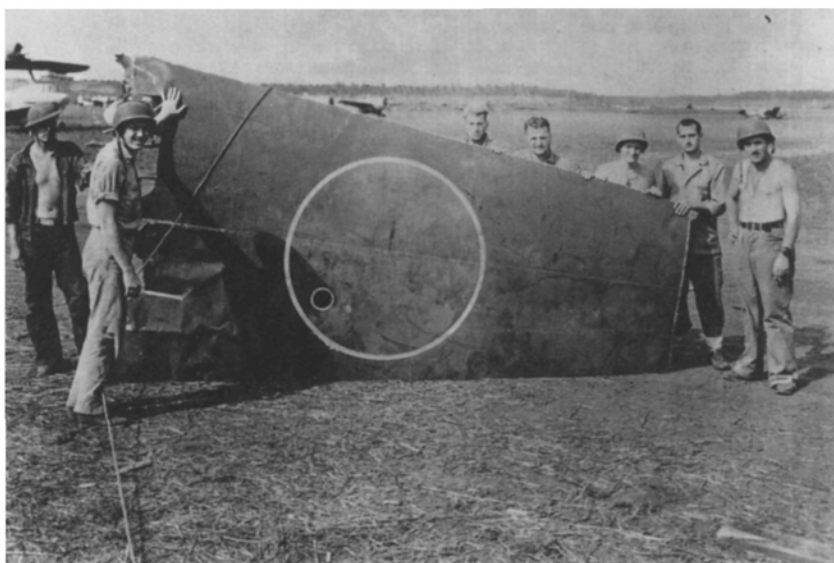
ing bombs for at least half a minute before they hit, plenty of time to take cover. The surprise was the great volume of the swish. It was not a whistle or a shriek but a definite swish that increased until it sounded like Niagara Falls or a train rushing by.

Bombs burst with a dull, crumping sound or, when they were close, a sharp crash. This, with the swish of others following, made an unbelievable racket for one or two minutes. We were concerned as the explosions marched toward us, or relieved as they marched away. One day the bursts came relentlessly toward me like terrible giant footsteps, each one closer. The ground shook worse and worse. I had a burning urge to run but enough sense to sit tight. I had seen too many men hit when they ran. Logic told me that there was almost no chance that a bomb would drop directly on me. If it did, I'd have nothing to worry about. The closest explosion showered me with dirt, choking me with smoke and powder. The pounding steps marched off toward the beach. Only then could I hear the drone of the bombers.

Our fighters stayed clear while our antiaircraft guns were firing. When that stopped, the fighters closed in. We heard nothing but the whine of power dives and the rattle of guns, but we saw the victims fall. One banner day, I counted sixteen in three minutes. One bomber fell in a vertical dive, its shrill scream rising in pitch and volume until I thought that it was coming right into my foxhole. It crashed a mile away. Everyone on the island thought that it was headed for him.

The best air show was on 12 September. The raid was heavy. I was in a hole, but in the open, with a clear view of the sky. The planes came in from the south, lower than usual. Our antiaircraft fire hit the lead plane and tore off one wing in a single piece. The bodies of the crew hurtled down like bombs. The fuselage broke into tiny fragments. Light and bright, they hung in the air for half an hour, glinting in the sun. Someone with great imagination thought that they were "phosphorous paper," which would start fires wherever it landed.

The wing floated down slowly, turning over and over, and landed on the airfield. Souvenir hunters sawed and hacked all day, getting material for bracelets and watchbands. This "Guadalcanal jewelry" was in big demand on the island and in areas to the south. Bob Howard



Good shooting brought the lead Japanese bomber down during the 12 September 1942 air raid. This wing was the largest single piece to fall from the plane. USMC photo.

showed off his newly fashioned bracelet to a visitor from Noumea. "Where did you get the material?" the visitor asked.

"Oh," said Bob, "it's delivered by air. The Japanese government makes it."

Japanese losses in those attacks were staggering. We shot down 25 percent of the planes. Many more were so badly damaged that they probably never returned to base. In comparison, our losses were light. We couldn't afford to lose a single plane, let alone a pilot. Those we did lose were cruel blows indeed, but the numbers were nothing like those of the Japanese. Damaged American planes were usually under at least partial control and, thanks to their self-sealing gas tanks, seldom in flames. Pilots were protected by armor. Given a few seconds, they could often bail out to land safely in the bay or in the jungle. With help from islanders, most of them made it back to our lines. One pilot was nineteen days on the way, passing through miles of enemy territory, living on roots and berries.

In view of the large number of aircraft involved and, especially the number lost, damage was ridiculously small. The field was pock-marked almost every day, but the runway, hit far less frequently, was quickly repaired. In one raid, the Japanese destroyed two of our hangars (which they had built). Oxygen and ammunition made such a hot fire that we could only let it burn. We lost many specialized tools.

Casualties, too, were light, all things considered. We lost a few people who were curious enough to stay in the open, but most of our losses were caused by direct hits on shelters, or air bursts over fox-holes and slit trenches.

The daylight raids proved to us—but apparently not to the Japanese—that aerial bombing alone could not knock out the airfield. It slowed operations and did damage, but the most telling effect was on us. The long hours of waiting and the regular day-to-day timetable exacted a heavy toll. We took small comfort in the mathematical probability of being hit. Somebody figured it to be 1 in 12.5 million. Each day more of the odds were used up.

At the end of September, units in the immediate target area began moving men to the beach during raids. This improved morale but was a confession that the attacks were beginning to hurt. I often went to Observer Right, where we had a small radio. We could hear our pilots talking to each other, giving orders, and shouting warnings.

One day, while we were away, a bomb burst ten feet from our sleeping tent. It riddled canvas, clothes, and bedding, hundreds of tiny holes in one pair of pants. We shoveled out the debris and drew new gear. Next morning, the Engineers installed a new deck. A few days later, another bomb demolished our office tent. That made two thoroughly shredded tents in less than a week. The colonel sent them back to the quartermaster on a trade-in basis, but the quartermaster jokingly refused on the grounds that we were not taking proper care of them. After some good-natured argument, we got new tents. One of those was destroyed a week later.

Another time, our jeep was damaged, one bomb splinter through the crankcase, one through the cylinder block, and three through the tires. The transport boys towed her away, but two days later she was back, with an asthmatic wheeze that lasted the rest of the campaign.



While no one was killed in the explosion, our radio station was a total loss after one direct hit. USMC photo.

One jeep of the Eleventh Marines took a direct hit. The largest piece they found was a spark plug.

The luckiest group was the 20mm gun crew nearest to us on the airfield. Their gun was dug in. About thirty feet away, in a fit of energy, they had dug in their sleeping quarters so that their cots were below ground level. One night a plane slipped in and dropped a bomb on the gun, destroying it. If the crew had had a minute's warning, they would have been manning it. Two days later, during a major attack, when they were manning a replacement gun, a bomb hit their sleeping quarters. Sergeant Fitch said, "Our numbers just weren't up."

If the Japanese had been able to catch our planes on the ground, they could have knocked out our entire air operation. The field, after all, was merely a place. Our planes were the menace to the Japanese. When one heavy stick of bombs fell on a group of our derelict planes, General Geiger was gleeful. "They went after our graveyard!" he shouted.



In addition to the full-scale raids, the Japanese launched smaller air attacks that were far less costly to them but did relatively more damage. Warning was never good. The coastwatchers seldom saw them, and they were too low for our radar. One attack hit a destroyer towing a barge loaded with 250 thousand gallons of gasoline. The Japanese sank the destroyer but streaked for home as soon as it went down. The barge, unhit, drifted for two days before being brought on to Guadalcanal.

Eighteen planes attacked destroyer-transport *Colhoun*. Diving out of a big cloud, they sank the ship with five direct hits. A large reinforcement for our fighter planes had just landed at the field. Rear Admiral McCain was in the B-17 that provided navigational support. He stepped from the plane wearing his regulation Navy cap. As we exchanged greetings, enemy planes swooped low in a strafing run. We dived over an embankment and tumbled, admiral and all, down the steep slope to the bottom. When the admiral picked himself up, he had somehow exchanged his Navy cap for a steel helmet. Nobody knew where it came from or to whom it belonged.

Night raids were serious. Our first notice was usually the sound of a plane, a twin-engined craft. The motors were somehow out of synchronization and produced a curious sound, as though the engines were revolving. We called the pilot "Washing Machine Charlie." He carried eight 250-pound bombs. With his long cruising range, he often circled for hours, dropping one bomb each time around. After a few weeks of this, many men dug in their bunks so they could remain in bed. Others, even with no protection, refused to get up unless Charlie was directly overhead. I dug a hole in the coral beside my cot so I could just roll into it, but my mosquito net prevented quick movement.

As we learned to recognize the sound of each type of aircraft engine, we slept while our planes flew in and out, but the instant an enemy came in, we awoke and ran for the hole. Each night we had to decide if it was advisable to remain fully clothed. Major Moran designated "shoes on" and "shoes off" nights, based on whether or not ships were headed our way, and on the possibility of an air raid. A few times we stripped down to our shorts and crawled into bed for a real sleep. Nights for that kind of repose were rare and were agreed

on only after careful calculations. Even then, we were wrong about half the time. In the wild nights of the second half of October, we slept fully clothed on top of our blankets but under our mosquito nets. For a short time we slept with our helmets on, the inside suspension making a comfortable but hot headrest.

Army major general Alexander Patch wore pajamas every night. When Condition Red sounded, he turned on all of his lights to look for his shoes and helmet. My men, next door in the photo lab, used the cover of what darkness remained to let him know what they thought of it. One night, a large bomb fell just behind the general's house. After that, the search was conducted in the dark with swearing, muttering, and stumbling.

It was not the planes that did the damage but the hours without sleep and the terror when the bombs fell. In itself, each night was little more than a nuisance, but night after night, week after week, month after month, the attacks built tension. We could only lie there, listen to the motors, and count the bombs. Charlie carried eight. Now only four were left, or three, two, or one—forever, it seemed, until the last one dropped. By then, dawn was breaking. Plane for plane, bomb for bomb, the Japanese got more from their night operations than they did from their large daylight raids.

Except for our fighters, our most valuable planes were C-47s, the DC-3 transports of peacetime. In the desperate days of short supply, they flew unarmed from Noumea and the New Hebrides, bringing torpedoes, bombs, gasoline, and special parts. When space permitted, they carried high-priority mail and a few passengers. Lt. Art Claffy, arriving on the morning of 15 October, poked a Springfield rifle through a loophole in one of the windows, ready with the other passengers to repel a swarm of Zeros that was expected to attack.

Malaria patients and seriously wounded were often evacuated by C-47s. Once I heard two men discussing matters.

"What happened to Joe?" one asked. "Was he hurt bad?"

"He sure was," came the reply. "They had to excavate him."

Every morning, ambulances drove from our primitive hospital to the airfield. By the time the sun had risen over the mountains, the planes were headed south, carrying those whose lives depended on a cooler climate or better care than we could provide.



First Marines hospital in August 1942. USMC photo.

Practically all of the planes on the island served at one time or another on reconnaissance missions. They ranged far, but their reports were not accurate. Supposed convoys of transports turned out to be floating coconut logs. Alleged aircraft carriers were really islands. More than once, a supposed battleship or heavy cruiser was only a destroyer or a barge. Inaccuracies were due to the distance at which observations were made, poor weather, the inexperience of pilots, and the speed of flight. No wonder that aerial reconnaissance now relies on photographs.

Even if observations were accurate, reports were sometimes garbled. When numbers were included, they were always repeated. For example, we would say "2, repeat 2." A B-17 cruising far to the north radioed back, "Have sighted 3, repeat 3, ships; distance from Cactus, 280 miles; bearing, 340." As the report reached us, it was "Have sighted 33 ships." Things were hectic until we learned of the error.

In spite of all the mistakes, planes were our best eyes, our most

frequent contact with the outside world, and our strongest defense. We who were bound to the earth often watched with envy as they soared into the clouds. There was no finer sight than their return from a mission at sunset. We could hear them far off. Then, in the darkening sky, we saw the flare from their engines, the red lights on their wing tips, and finally their landing lights. Our pilots were back on a jungle island they had somehow learned to call home. For us, the sun rose and set in those planes. We were not so amused as one might think when a notice appeared on the bulletin board at air headquarters. Orders and bulletins issued in a military establishment invariably end with:

By Command, Major General So and So. One posted that day was the best yet:

Headquarters  
First Marine Air Wing  
In The Field  
11 September, 1942

SUBJECT: Sun, rising and setting of

1. Tomorrow, Friday, 12 September, sun rises 0610, sets 1806.

By Command,  
Roy S. Geiger  
Major General USMC

Naval bombardments were almost as common as air raids. We often debated which was worse. For me, air attacks were worse. Our coral ridge gave us some protection from gunfire, but not from bombs. In the earliest days, before our planes arrived, we were shelled from the sea in daylight. On 12 August, two Higgins boats and a small barge, traveling between Guadalcanal and Tulagi, were attacked by a submarine. The sub turned back when it came within range of our shore batteries, and the boats reached Tulagi safely. After that, no boats crossed the bay until our planes arrived. In the meantime, night bombardments began.



Fighter pilots Maj. John Smith, Maj. Robert Galer, and Capt. Marion Carl collectively shot down forty-six enemy planes. Each received the Navy Cross. USMC photo.

At 0530 on 16 August, a submarine surfaced off Lunga Point and shelled our positions. With no answering fire from shore, he became bolder and on following nights returned so often that we felt we knew him. We called him "Oscar." With still no answering fire, the Japanese sent destroyers and cruisers. Their powerful searchlights raked the beach from just offshore—but out of reach of our small-arms fire. Until Admiral Halsey took over, we had no naval help to speak of. On 12 October, however, Admiral Ghormley sent four cruisers and four destroyers for what developed into the Battle of Cape Esperance. Although a qualified victory for us, it showed how control of the area was balanced between us and the Japanese. The next day, 13 October, a convoy brought in our first Army reinforcements. Never in history had Marines been so glad to see Army troops. They came on the wildest day of the whole operation. We had two big air raids, and Japanese artillery shelled us for the first time. Our ships

departed at 2100. Less than three hours later, the Japanese pounded us with the heaviest naval bombardment of the campaign.

With our Army reinforcements safely ashore, we felt that we might have turned a corner in the campaign. After chow, we strolled back toward the CP. The sky was gold and red, and the air was quiet. At the crossroads, we turned down the path to our tents. The grass, tall and dry, rustled in the breeze. Over on the field, a plane was sputtering. Ignition trouble, I thought, or maybe a bullet. On the tip of the ridge, two island police scouts were talking, their low tones barely audible. Gunner Banta's radio was going, the batteries still good after all these weeks. He saved them for the news.

The planes returned from Search Charlie, two SBDs tonight, their wing lights bright red in the darkening sky. I dropped onto my cot and dozed off. Soon I was walking down a country road beside a lake. The lake was blue. I didn't remember seeing color in a dream before.

A hum! I awoke instantly. That wasn't one of ours. The pagoda siren wailed Condition Red. Around me, there wasn't a sound. This was old stuff; no need to get up. He was miles away. The drone was nearer now, like a great bee circling a flower. He was close but over the field. Why didn't those guys turn on the searchlights? They never did. What the hell were they for? The plane was still up there, circling. One engine. That meant that it had no bombs but also that it was from a warship. Trouble was coming. I stared up at the canvas of the tent, trying to see through it to the sky. There was nothing to see, even if I could, only black, and no damned searchlights.

Lightning flashed. I saw the grass outside, then it was dark again. That was a long way off. I counted for the thunder . . . seven, eight, nine, ten. Light carries a long way at night . . . nineteen, twenty, twenty-one. . . . Damn that plane, keeping us awake! . . . twenty-six, twenty-seven, twenty-eight.

Outside, a thousand rockets burst in the sky. The tent snapped taut. The blast blew me from my bunk. I groped for my shoes. This was a shoes-off night, the major had said. The light died out in a shower of sparks. Somebody shouted, "Star shell."

Another crushing blast! A heavy salvo landed on the other side of the ridge. Trees snapped. Men up there cascaded down the cliff, Major Mather in pajamas.

We hit the hole and sat, eleven of us, in a nine-foot-square hole. The roof was logs, steel plates, and sandbags, but best of all, we were in the shelter of the ridge. Our single light bulb swayed as salvos shook the ground. Schlaghek had been on duty. What was the scoop? No scoop, but this was no sub or destroyer. This was a cruiser, or maybe a battleship!

Wham! Another salvo close by, then silence. There we sat—the colonel, the major, all of us—sitting on palm-log seats, staring at the too-low ceiling. Nobody spoke. We were hot and sweaty. I took off my helmet. I felt better with it on, but I was hot. My hair was wet. The plane was overhead now, and there was that flash again, red and fiery. I saw it out of the corner of my eye. Let's see. Count to twenty-eight. We waited and counted. My knees wouldn't stop shaking. Howard's teeth chattered. We both knew that it wasn't the cold . . . twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-seven . . .

The earth heaved. Heavy pieces thudded on the roof. My stomach caved in. My head swam. The light went out. Or was I blind? I choked on the dust now thick in the air. We all coughed, gasped, coughed again, and sat there dazed. Nobody spoke. Nobody said "That was close."

The colonel lit a match. "Everybody OK?"

There was a chorus of yeses and one faint "I guess so."

"Light the lantern, Dick."

He passed the match to Major Evans. Our eyes followed it as though it were our life, about to go out, flickering as it neared its end. It did go out. We were in the dark again. In the tent outside, the phone rang. Schlay got up to answer it.

"Stay where you are," said the colonel. "Nothing's that import—"

Again the earth heaved. The roof bounced. The steel plates rang. One of the logs cracked but didn't give. Dirt crashed into the entrance behind me. A tinkle of glass got through the blast. I smelled kerosene.

Because we were in the center of the impact area, there was no whine, no shriek, no sound like a train, just the blast. It came all at once—the noise, the punch of wind, the dust. I guess we all blacked out.

"Goddamn these cardboard matches!" It was the colonel again.

“Lantern’s busted, Colonel. Kerosene on the deck. Better not light a match . . .”

This time we felt the blast of heat. My helmet banged the log overhead. Something heavy, solid crashed onto the roof. Sand poured down the back of my neck. Major Evans felt around in the dark. “Where the hell’s the flashlight? My leg’s caught. Oh, it’s Schiller. You OK? Where’s the flashlight? Here it is.”

He shone the light around. We were unhurt. Nobody spoke. In the movies, someone would wisecrack, ask for a cigarette, go hysterical, something. We just sat and stared, stared at whatever our eyes were fixed on. I was looking at the weave of my dungarees over my knee. It was a fine weave in sections one-quarter-inch wide, diagonal. Was that blood? I rolled up my pant leg. Just a scratch.

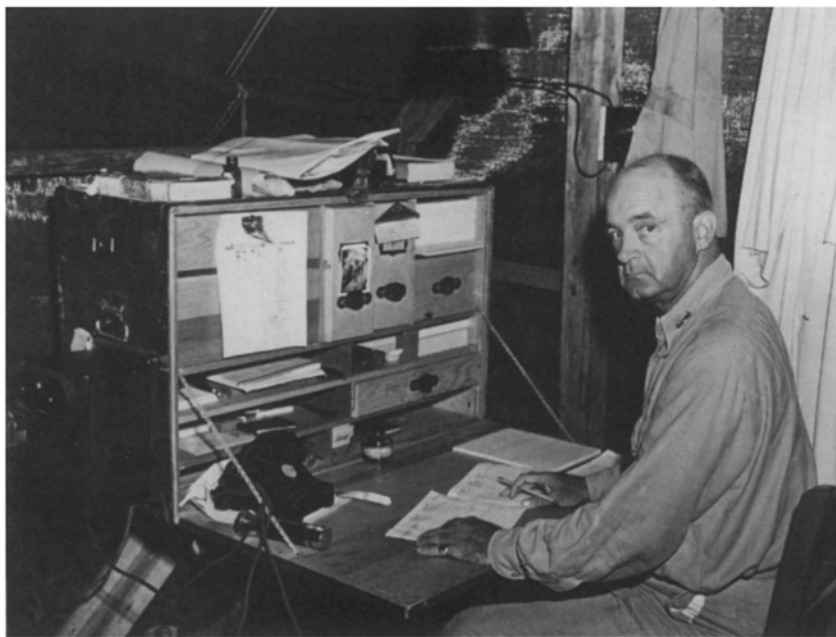
I breathed hard and deep. My heart pounded. The shells were dropping farther away now, half a mile maybe, but at every crash sand filtered down my neck. Then it was over. The plane was gone. The crashes had stopped. We came out into clean, fresh air. We gulped it in, threw off our helmets, and fell flat on the grass. We were alive!

I gloried in the sunrise, a spectacle of red and gold. “That does it!” shouted the colonel. “Karl, don’t you ever see anything but the bright side?”

Daylight disclosed what we had feared but dared not say. We had been pounded by a battleship! Atop our shelter were two big pieces of shrapnel, three inches thick, two feet long. Two men could barely lift them. A little jigsaw work showed that they were parts of one shell fourteen inches in diameter! Whole salvos had landed around us. The airfield had been clobbered. We learned later—much later—that there had been not one battleship but two, *Kongo* and *Haruna*. Each had fired five hundred rounds, one of the heaviest naval bombardments in history.

At 0700 Observer Left reported Japanese transports unloading to the west. Three enemy destroyers were circling them. Here was an example of how elementary, how sketchy our information could be. It was vital to know how many ships there were, what type they were, and where they were unloading. Were they within range of our artillery? No planes were in the air yet. Calls from Kukum reported three, four, maybe five ships. Nobody knew for sure. Comdr. Dwight Dex-





Maj. Gen. Archer A. Vandegrift, commander of the First Marine Division on Guadalcanal in November 1942. USMC photo by Thayer Soule.

ter was seldom helpful anyway. The only way to find out was by triangulation from two points within our lines.

I took Fred Peachy with me and drove to Observer Left. With the BC scope there, I could see three ships well down the coast: not transports, but cargo ships. Two destroyers circled them. To determine the exact spot, we needed a second observation point as far away from my position as we could get. Peachy went along the coast toward Kukum and set up his scope at the best spot he could find. By triangulating with my position, we determined that the ships were at the far side of the first river beyond Domma Reef. Our maps didn't show that part of the coast in any detail, but it was far beyond the range of our artillery.

I tried to phone the colonel, but the line was out. Most of them were that morning. We had to go more than a mile to find one that worked. While I was making my report, enemy planes zoomed in on

a strafing run. Bullets zipped around me. The colonel, at the other end of the line, was calm and cool. When I ducked or stopped talking, he pressed me for details.

Finally I said, "Colonel, are you in a hole?"

"Of course."

"Well, I'm not, and it's getting pretty hot around here."

I yanked the phone from the tree to which it was strapped and, dragging the line behind me, slid into a small dugout. Just in time! Two planes roared in. A storm of fire broke around me.

By now it was 1030. As I finished talking, two of our dive-bombers hit one of the ships. They didn't need a position on a map. They could see the ships below them. Two Catalinas joined in. At 1130, two B-17s dropped bombs squarely on the stern of another ship. The enemy was trying to leave, but two of their ships were burning on the beach.

The next day, as the naval seesaw tilted in our favor, two of our destroyers pounded Japanese supplies piled on the beach. Big columns of smoke rose for three days.

Years later, in 1965, I returned to Guadalcanal. Armed with a fine new map, I found the hulks of those ships, still there, where I had reported them to be.

The next week saw the major ground battle of the campaign: three days and nights of continuous fighting at Bloody Ridge, the Matanikau River, and elsewhere. Casualties were heavy on both sides, but luck was with us. The Japanese had not realized the extreme difficulty of the terrain and, again, were unable to coordinate their attack. In addition, they were short of supplies, riddled with disease, enfeebled by hunger. I missed those crucial battles because I was stuck on Tulagi, but that was a perfect place to watch an even more important event, the naval Battle of Guadalcanal.



Japanese tanks destroyed at the mouth of the Matanikau River, 23 October 1942. US photo by Thayer Soule, November 1942.

## *The Naval Battle of Guadalcanal*

Ever since the first day of the campaign, I had been eager to see my four men on Tulagi. They were only twenty miles away, but I hadn't heard from them in more than two months. On 22 October our work suddenly cleared up. The same day *Seminole*, a large seagoing Navy tug, arrived at Red Beach with supplies from Tulagi. She was going directly back. I took advantage of the opportunity.

Japanese artillery had just hit Red Beach. Two men were dead. More shells were expected at any moment. *Seminole*, hit by shell splinters, had moved east, out of range. I was relieved to get aboard, but as we headed out into the bay an air alert sounded. For the entire hour-long journey, we feared dive-bombing or strafing. We zigzagged wildly as planes flew over, but they didn't attack. We made Tulagi safely.

Tulagi's harbor was protected by the wooded hills of nearby Florida Island. The water was calm and deep. On our left towered the cliffs of Tulagi. From the dock, I walked along a pleasant, shaded street crowded with men in clean uniforms and sun helmets, talking cheerfully and laughing. With a jolt, I realized how grim and grimy I had become.

On the hill, a large rambling house, once the residence of the bishop of the Solomons, was now the headquarters of General Rupertus. The guest room had a large bed and an adjoining honest-to-goodness hot shower. Skipping formal introductions, I dived into the shower. The next ten minutes were my happiest since leaving home. With a complete change of clothes and feeling like a different person, I went out onto the porch.

Everyone, from the general down, pounced on me for informa-

tion. They were starved for details about Guadalcanal. They heard pilots on the radio all the time but got most of their news from a radio station in San Francisco. As far as battle details were concerned, they might as well have been in New Zealand. I spent the afternoon explaining the situation. A second lieutenant briefing a general and his senior staff is in an awkward position, but I was emboldened by an incident in Quantico months before. An instructor there, a junior lieutenant, faced a room full of brass, mostly majors and lieutenant colonels, all there to learn. His opening remark won his audience instantly. "Gentlemen," he said, "I don't know why I was picked for this job. A lot of officers know more about this than I do. . . . However, I don't see any of them here this morning."

We had supper on the large screened porch, seated at a mahogany table with silver service and fine china. The food, supplied by visiting ships, was hot and hearty. Afterward, I strolled up the hill and watched the sun set behind Florida Island. Here was the true South Seas. I drifted into a dreamworld but snapped back when the PT boats roared out on patrol. Then it was quiet once more. Back at the house, I stripped to my skivvies and snuggled into a bed with sheets for ten hours of sleep.

Next morning, I found my men, who had been without supervision since the landing. As might be expected, they hadn't done much. Together, we set out on a survey of the island. On the dock, mountains of supplies awaited shipment to Guadalcanal. Most of the buildings were intact, or at least repaired, but what had been Chinatown was rubble. Several airy tents near the water served as the hospital. At a cool, shady spot, a sturdy bench had a sign above it:

THIS BENCH IS FOR YOU  
IT IS NOT SO HARD AS IT LOOKS  
STAY A WHILE, AND CHEW THE FAT

We followed a narrow path between the cliffs and the sea to Sesape, a tiny village taken over for the PT base. Beyond, the trail narrowed as it led through a dense tangle of mangroves. The Japanese had erected no defenses there, but the Marines had put in long lines of sharp wooden stakes and barricades of heavy logs wrapped with barbed wire. Wooden walkways led over the mangroves to the

water's edge. Lookouts were alert against attempted landings from Florida Island, only yards away.

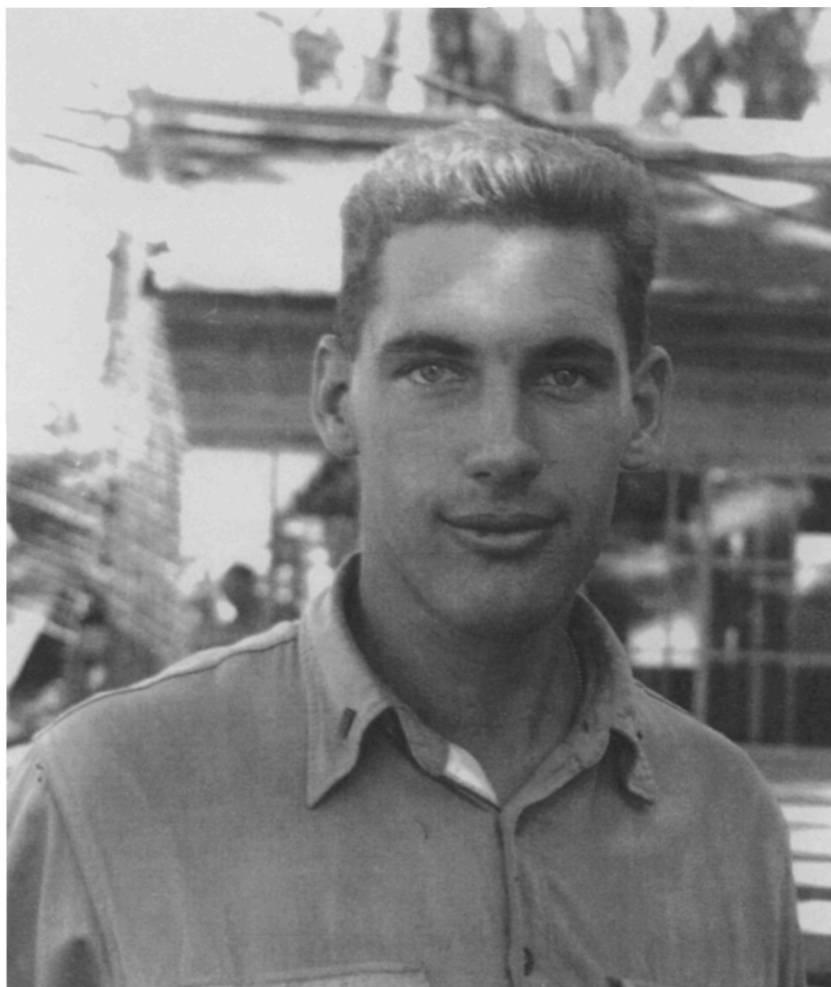
We started a detailed terrain study, and made pictures of Japanese positions and equipment. For the next week we scaled cliffs, waded through swamps, and scoured enemy emplacements in the cliffs and caves. It was hard, hot, dangerous work. A few Japanese still roamed the island. We moved with care, especially in and near caves. No mines had been found on Tulagi, so we didn't have to worry about that.

The first afternoon, it poured for hours. I spent most of it in the junior officers' quarters, a large house open on all sides. We played checkers, listened to the radio and a tinny phonograph, then sat on the porch and looked out over the harbor. The change from Guadalcanal was unbelievable. Only then did I realize how jittery I had become. Troops on Tulagi should have been rotated with the tired regiments on Guadalcanal, but transportation was too limited and the trip across the bay was too hazardous. In fact, my stay on Tulagi was lengthened from a few days to nearly three weeks when *Seminole*, the only transportation, was sunk three days after my arrival.

I enjoyed the quiet while I could. In the evenings we sat on the lawn in big armchairs, listening to the radio, talking, or reading. Then the PT boats left on patrol, and shortly afterward we turned in. Several nights, an enemy plane flew over, always high. The first time, with my Guadalcanal training, I bounded out of bed, but no one else paid any attention. After that, I remained in bed, though it took a lot of self-control.

We had movies on Tulagi! An open-air theater at King George Playing Field showed films borrowed from visiting ships. The picture was large and bright, with good sound. The best film was *The Great Dictator*, starring Charlie Chaplin.

The observation post, the highest spot on the island, was three hundred feet above the water. From there, we had a clear view of the bay, and could even see the air raids on Guadalcanal. Large comfortable dugouts were cut into the rock. Twice we slept up there to be on hand for the big naval battle that we knew was imminent. Naval battles



Briefly stranded in the luxury of Tulagi, 2nd Lt. Karl Thayer Soule Jr. missed some of the hardest land fighting on Guadalcanal. He was, however, in a perfect location to witness the naval battle. USMC photo, unofficial.

decided the fate of Guadalcanal. We Marines took and held the airfield. Our navy prevented the heaviest Japanese reinforcements from reaching the island, and sank a good number of their ships in the process. We lost heavily, too. I had been uncomfortably close to the disastrous Battle of Savo Island. Now I had a ringside seat for the Battle of Guadalcanal, a clash that would settle the naval question once and for all.

The first round came on 12 November, when a large, heavily escorted American convoy landed 5,500 Army and Marine reinforcements. The Japanese attacked by air but scored no hits. We shot down most of their planes, but that was only a skirmish. A powerful Japanese fleet was headed our way. Our empty transports, escorted by a few destroyers, withdrew. We had seen this pattern many times before, but this time heavy warships remained nearby.

The Japanese bombardment force consisted of two battleships, a light cruiser, and fourteen destroyers. A day behind them, eleven transports carried forty thousand men and huge amounts of supplies. To meet this formidable armada, we had a force of two heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, and eight destroyers. Carrier *Enterprise* and two battleships were on their way but couldn't arrive until the next day. Adm. William F. Halsey, commander in the South Pacific (COMSOPAC) radioed to Adm. Daniel Callaghan, commander of the task force, "Hit 'em with what you've got."

The Japanese arrived at 0140 on 13 November, intent on dealing the airfield a knockout blow. From past experience, they expected a free hand at night. Admiral Callaghan hit them hard but received heavy damage in the process. The ships were so close to each other that their big guns could not be depressed enough to hit near the waterline. One crashing salvo destroyed *San Francisco's* bridge, killing Admiral Callaghan and most of his staff. The battle roared on. From the top of Tulagi, we saw the whole bay illuminated by blazing guns, exploding ships, and flares from planes overhead. After an hour, the firing died down, leaving only burning, blasted ships.

Next morning, only four ships were in sight, all American, all damaged: *Atlanta* dead in the water, *Portland* circling aimlessly with her steering gear smashed, and two burning destroyers. A third destroyer, badly damaged, had been towed into Tulagi harbor. Search-



ing the sea with our glasses, we were in the worst of spirits. After all that firing, all that thunder, the blazing fires and rumbling cannonades—after all that—only this was left. In the midst of our dejection, Commander Ostrander came bouncing up the hill. Looking out over the scene, he rubbed his hands. “Well,” he cried, “all the Japs must be at the bottom of the bay. There’s not one left afloat!”

That had not occurred to us, but it turned out to be almost the case. Several Japanese ships had been sunk. *Hiei*, one of the battleships, was severely damaged but still afloat. We finally spotted her off the tip of Savo. By sunset we had dubbed her “the unsinkable battleship.” Our forces pounded her relentlessly, but she didn’t go down until late that evening.

Despite heavy losses in the bombardment group, the Japanese transports came doggedly on. On 14 November, planes from *Enterprise* and Guadalcanal flew up The Slot and struck them. By evening, the planes had sunk six transports. Three others had turned back. The remaining ships held their course for Guadalcanal. In a few terrible hours the Japanese lost thousands of men. A pilot told me later that it was the worst sight he had ever seen. He could have walked for miles on Japanese heads bobbing in the water.

At 2315 the Japanese warships arrived near Savo Island. Battleships *Washington* and *South Dakota* were waiting. Heavy damage was inflicted on both sides, but again we won. Still, the Japanese would not give up. Their battle fleet was broken, and most of their landing force was destroyed, but the four remaining ships, burning and listing, pushed on. At dawn, naked and alone, they entered the bay and beached near Tassafaronga. Our shore guns hit them at once. Destroyer *Meade* pummeled them, while our planes swooped down. We on Tulagi admired the crews of those ships. They came in with no escort or aerial support, determined to complete a job that had become impossible.

So ended the Naval Battle of Guadalcanal. Many ships in both of those proud fleets were sunk. Three divisions of Japanese troops lay at the bottom of the sea. Admiral Halsey had always said he was willing to divide the Pacific with Japan: We would take the top; Japan would take the bottom. So it would be before the war was over. Halsey would do more than most men to bring it about.

Shortly after the battle, I finally got transportation back to Guadalcanal. The last week of November, we began packing to leave the island for Australia. The first echelon departed on 9 December, and, for a change, the Photo Section was part of it. The U.S. Army took over defense of the island. There had been no air raid for three weeks. The Japanese, huddled at the far end of the island with few supplies and little food, had contributed mightily to their own defeat. Overconfident, arrogant, overextended, they had underestimated our numbers, our determination, our fighting ability, and our resources. Largely because of that, they lost the opportunity of the early weeks. By the time they made their all-out effort, we had marshaled sufficient strength to stop them. They had courage and determination just as we did, but we replaced our losses faster. We rescued many more of our pilots than they did. We had brains, luck, and guts. And we had Halsey!

We Marines were shot up, and had made mistakes aplenty. We had endured tight squeezes and desperate shortages, all manner of trial and deprivation. Now, after four months and two days, we sailed away, victorious.

Years later, Vice Admiral Raizo Tanaka of the Japanese Imperial Navy had this to say: "I believe that Japan's operational and planning errors will stand forever as classic examples how not to conduct a campaign. Japan's doom was sealed with the closing of the struggle for Guadalcanal. Just as it betokened the military character and strength of her opponent, so it presaged Japan's weakness and lack of planning that would spell her defeat."

In December 1942, almost the entire war was yet to be fought. The First Marine Division would play a major part, but first it had to be rebuilt from the ground up.

## 8

### *Australia*

Our convoy arrived in Brisbane on 14 December 1942. The city was low and ugly, but it was Australia, with no shooting, plenty of women, and few men. Units formed on the dock and boarded trucks for the trip to camp. As one rifle company completed Inspection Arms, there was a loud report. A bullet tore through the galvanized iron roof.

"All right," bawled the sergeant, "unload 'em, and I mean empty. Our war's over!"

Camp Cable was thirty-two miles away, thirty-two miles of narrow, winding road through flat, empty country. Discontent grew as the miles rolled by.

"Christ," said a young redhead, "we'll never make liberty in Brisbane from way out here in the boondocks!"

"That's the Army for you," groaned another youngster, "fifty miles from no place, and not one broad in the county." (The division was now assigned to the Sixth Army, under General MacArthur. He had selected the camp for us.)

"They'll show up when they know we're here," chirped a youthful voice in the back.

Then there was just the hum of the tires on the wet pavement.

Camp Cable was in marshy land spotted with trees and ponds, and laced with streams. Buildings were widely dispersed, apparently in fear of air attacks. Though perhaps justified when the camp was built, it was no longer necessary.

"Look at this damned lashup," Sexton moaned, throwing up his hands in disgust, "a mile to the head, and two miles to chow!"

He was right. To men who for mutual protection had lived side by side for months, dispersement nine hundred miles to the rear was

ridiculous. But it was home for now, and nobody was shooting at us. As we moved into our assigned area, the last units of an Army division were leaving. They watched as we Marine officers put up our own tents and moved our own gear.

"Hey, Mac," a GI called to one of my men. "What's with your officers? Don't you guys do that stuff for them?"

"Blow, dogface," came the reply. "We're Marines. You wouldn't understand."

By sunset we were squared away. I had a good wall tent with a wood deck, a cot, and a mosquito net. My footlocker, which I had left in New Zealand, appeared miraculously, delivered by two men who said not a word.

Problems arose immediately. There was an extensive plumbing system, but no water. With more than five thousand men to supply, the Engineers brought it in by truck for three days, slowly, laboriously, never enough. Water was in the pipes, but the valves turned in the opposite direction from ours. "Those damn Limeys," groaned the corpsman who discovered it. "I suppose we might have known!"

The first few nights we were bothered by planes. They were overhead all day, too, but at night the engines woke us from a sound sleep. Theirs was not the round, throaty roar of American planes, but a whining purr. I would wake and listen, staring at the tent roof. I knew the plane was friendly, but I broke into a cold sweat. Fighting my instinct to run for cover, I grabbed the side of the cot and held on, tense, fearful, confused by sleep, torn between fright and reason. Then the plane flew on, and the camp was quiet again.

Our first liberty in Brisbane was a disappointment. With our hopes, dreams, and four months' back pay, we would have found any place except Paris below our expectations, but Brisbane was just plain dull. It was wartime, to be sure, but Brisbane was dull—blocks of poorly constructed buildings with rusted iron roofs. There were no nightclubs, and the bars were under many restrictions. Looking back now, I think the rules were those of ordinary sobriety and good conduct, but to some of the men they were irksome.

Officers could eat at Lennon's Hotel. Dinner was an improvement over camp but left us hungry. There was no rationing, but regulations set the price of a meal so low that only small servings were

possible, and the menu was limited. Rumor had it that General MacArthur lived on the top floor of the hotel. After an extended round of drinking, a small group of Marines stationed themselves at the entrance, determined to tell "Dugout Doug" what they thought of him and his goddamn camp, but the MPs arrived before the general did. We never found out for sure if he did live there.

No doubt many men found what they were looking for in Brisbane, but my small group took a long, aimless walk around town, had a drink and dinner, then went to a movie. The newsreel featured some of our footage, the first I had seen. It was getting through after all, and it looked good.

After that first visit, Brisbane no longer tempted me. It was far from camp and, though it offered a change of scene, wasn't worth the effort. Then, too, after a week of indolence, we were finding things to do at camp. As part of the Army, we obtained supplies and equipment from a big depot, mountains of materiel the like of which we had never seen or imagined. It was dogface gear, of course, but all we needed, no questions asked. After four months of bare essentials, the change was miraculous. We drew replacements for the equipment we had left on the island, and traded torn, faded utility clothes for new khakis. We wore Army uniforms from head to toe.

There were personnel changes, too. The hospitals were filled with our sick, nearly all of them suffering from malaria or dysentery. Many had infections and other maladies that would not clear up in the hot, damp climate of Brisbane. Those men left for home by the shipload. We had reunions, too. The rear echelon, the "Wellington Commandos," arrived from New Zealand. Fat and shiny, dressed in pressed greens, they were apologetic about having missed the battle. We combat men were a breed apart, even the youngest of us tough and confident. We welcomed them, though, especially because their ship brought the division band and most of the office and personal gear we had left behind.

Rehabilitation proceeded apace. Two weeks of sleep did wonders. Everybody gained weight. Our hollow look disappeared. Then the rains came, and we found we were living in a swamp. It rained hard all one day, a steady downpour that rattled the eucalyptus, drummed on our tent, and formed streams and pools. The rain slack-

ened, but the water stayed on the ground. Every low place became a puddle. Streams became lakes. Torrents ran through the camp. It poured again that night and all the next day. Then it stopped, the sun came out, and with it, mosquitoes. Clouds of them hovered in the air and lurked in the bushes. Not even in Alaska had I seen anything like it.

Nowhere was there safety or relief. While I was shaving, five or six mosquitoes lit on one side of my face while I was lathering the other. They swarmed around our feet, and lit in squadrons on our food. They invaded the sanitary facilities and bit us in the most exposed, most sensitive places. Our only refuge was in bed with the net pulled tight. Even there, we weren't safe until after a thorough search inside the net with a flashlight. I blocked all the gaps and killed the few agile insects that zipped in as I climbed in.

The other haven, poor and uncertain at best, was within six feet of a smoky fire. Our eyes watered, our feet burned from the heat, and when the smoke blew the wrong way, we coughed for five minutes. My sharpest memories of Camp Cable are that fire, the songs we sang, the stories we told, and the long hours of comradeship that only such circumstances can produce. We talked about everything: what it was like back home, the island we had left, our friends who were gone. There were silences, too, when we watched the smoke curling up through the dripping leaves to the gray, wet sky, for it was still raining.

That Christmas was my first away from home. The others have blended into a single happy glow, but that one was different. We had turkey for dinner, the only evidence of the holiday. We sat by our fire, listened to the rain, and sang all the carols we knew, some of them over and over. Nobody talked much—just the carols, with a long silence now and then, and always the drip of the rain. Toward evening, the glow of our fire began to fade, and what little merriment we felt ebbed away. Dr. Albert Kitts stood up. "This is an emergency," he declared. "Break out the medical brandy."

The division's big present came two days later. The news spread in moments from one end of the camp to the other: We were leaving, going to Melbourne! General Vandegrift, after one look at Camp Cable, had demanded a change. Now transportation was available.

Packing to leave was the first real activity since our arrival, work we could whistle at.

It came too late. The mosquitoes had done their damage. Malaria had spread through every unit. Men who had not been near Guadalcanal contracted the fever. Fred Kidde swore that while lying in his bunk, he heard one mosquito say to another, "He looks like a good one. Shall we eat him here, or take him down to the swamp?"

"Better not do that," was the reply. "Down there, the big fellows might take him away from us."

One morning I awoke with a start. Someone, something was in my tent. I rolled over and came face to face with a cow, her nose only inches away from mine. We looked at each other for a full minute, the cow thoughtfully chewing her cud. Then she turned and wandered off.

On New Year's Day, I was promoted to first lieutenant. Being neither blind nor crippled, I passed the physical and bought my silver bars. One of the old-timers sneered the old Marine Corps adage, "Rank among lieutenants is like virginity among whores," but the title was better, and it meant more money. Practically all of us had allotments deducted from our pay for insurance, family payments, and so on. In my case, much of it was savings, well over half of my monthly income. Even so, I had more cash than I could use. The forty dollars with which I had left the States six months before was still almost intact, and I had a credit of several hundred dollars with the paymaster.

On one of our last nights at Camp Cable, several of us went into Brisbane. We had talked of painting the town red, but it rained again. We ended up with a dismal tour of window shopping, dinner at Lennon's—still no sign of MacArthur—and a movie. As we sat down in the balcony, it looked as if half the division was there. I don't remember the feature, but the short was *Target for Tonight*, a documentary on the RAF (Royal Air Force). The film showed crews boarding the planes and taking off for the continent. Then, with no warning, it cut to bombs falling toward the target. The sound track erupted with that loud swishing hiss we knew so well. Every Marine hit the deck. It was over in a moment, and we sheepishly returned to our seats. For a few seconds, self-preservation had been automatic. Battle was closer than we realized, its scars deeper than we thought.

On 7 January 1943, a large part of the division, all that was left, boarded *West Point*, the military name of *America*, a large ship formerly on the North Atlantic run. Much conversion work had been done. We had none of the frills of our first Pacific voyage, but we were headed out of our pesthole to a large, important city. Even then, Melbourne promised to be the best liberty port the Marine Corps had ever known.

Our cruise on *West Point* was probably the largest floating crap game ever held in the Pacific. With four months' pay burning holes in our pockets, most of us indulged in the illicit pastime. If we wanted to risk a dime or a quarter, there was a place to go. In other rooms, dollar bills were standard. In a few hot spots, a man couldn't gain entry for less than a hundred. In that four-day period, Navy regulations notwithstanding, the Marine Corps and *West Point* put Las Vegas, Reno, and Monte Carlo to shame. On the last day, after escalating from game to game, an enterprising corporal knocked on the door of his commanding officer's stateroom.

"Would the Captain be so kind as to keep this for me, sir?"

He placed a well-stuffed pillowcase on the bunk. The captain was puzzled. "What is it?"

"Money, sir," said the Corporal, "\$22,400!"

Melbourne, on the south coast of Australia, is the capital of the state of Victoria and the second city of the continent. Although a seaport, it is some distance from the ocean, at the head of a large bay. In 1943, its men were away at war, and the women—by reputation—were the prettiest and loneliest in Australia. No Marine landing was ever made with more enthusiasm or less opposition than the First Marine Division's assault on Melbourne.

Housing for an entire division was hard to find. Headquarters took over an office building in the heart of town. The staff, officers and men, lived at Camp Robinson, a small cricket ground and bowling club half an hour away. One regiment occupied the city's main cricket field. Another was at Balcombe, half an hour outside the city. Artillery was at Ballarat, fifty miles away. We took a week to get settled. At the end of it, our package mail caught up with us, six months' accumulation that nearly filled a ship's hold. Never have I



seen such a mountain of letters, old newspapers, magazines, bills, and packages from home. I had forty-five letters (all with good news) and six packages—cookies, a cake, and so on.

January was summer in Melbourne, and we made full use of the recreational facilities. There were three women to every man, miles of good beaches, and plenty of dark parks. Motorized transportation was hard to find, but we could rent bicycles, and the sidewalks were wide for walking. It was hot. Days in the nineties were common. One day, the mercury climbed to 107 degrees.

Melbourne was paradise with one serious shortage: Scotch whiskey. After three years of war, the supply was so badly depleted that a single bottle—when it could be found—brought at least twenty-five dollars. Someone, taking notice of this intolerable situation, pushed through a requisition or whatever is required for an item like Scotch, and we received a shipload. Even so, it was rationed. We at Division Intelligence were fortunate to have six officers who didn't like the stuff. What we couldn't do with our ration tickets wasn't worth doing. We exchanged them for cars, trucks, and supplies of all kinds, to say nothing of duty watches cheerfully stood by other, thirstier individuals.

Duty watches were the only damper on fun. Someone had to be in the downtown office at all times. We lieutenants caught the duty frequently, with the usual preponderance of Saturdays and Sundays. We had OD (Officer of the Day) assignments at camp, too, but they were only a minor inconvenience. We knew well in advance when our turn was coming. If our social engagements were too pressing, someone was always willing to trade.

I spent a couple of days looking for a place to get exercise. Camp had nothing to offer, at least not for officers. The YMCA had a couple of squash courts but no players. There was no weight room or pool. The showers were poor, with little hot water. Across the street from the office, however, I found a spa with a gym and a good masseur. The showers were better than at camp, with an endless supply of hot water. I often spent an hour or so there in late afternoon.

We had been in town only ten days when Maj. James Murray, division personnel officer, called me to his office. "Karl," he said, "you're the photographic officer. I want you to set up a program of movies for the division."

“Movies, sir?”

“Yes, movies. Photographic officer, movies. Get it? You’re elected. Now, what we want,” he continued, motioning me to a chair, “is a nice setup for each regiment, with regular movie films. We have projectors around somewhere, and I know we can get the films. Work with the PX officer. He’ll give you all the help you need.”

I spent the next week at the various camps looking for equipment and making plans. The two cricket fields with their grandstands were ideal. We needed only a booth and a screen. The other places were less satisfactory and more complicated, but we soon had five theaters, each supplied with good equipment and an eager audience. Films, however, like Scotch whiskey, were in short supply. The film exchanges were helpful, but the theatrical unions objected to free shows so close to downtown theaters. My choice was limited to good old films or bad recent ones. I took the old ones, a parade of Academy Award winners like *Stagecoach* and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. I had complaints now and then, but audiences were large and enthusiastic.

My motion picture duties put me on a transportation gravy train. With five camps to supervise and service with films, I needed a car. I called the Army motor pool, and a short time later Cpl. Albert Simmons appeared driving a Pontiac of curious design. It was a luxury coupe from the front bumper to the rear of the front seat, but from there on it was an open pickup, a common model today but unique at that time, ideal for one passenger and the heavy gear we had to carry. Simmons was an agreeable fellow and a fine man at the wheel, even driving on the left side of the road. We got along well. When we returned to camp, I thanked him and said good-bye.

“Same time tomorrow, Lieutenant?” he asked.

“Why, yes,” I said, startled. “That’ll be fine.”

I had that same car and driver for the next four months. I made no request, filed no report, but I had my wheels, and Simmons liked his job. Each morning at 0800, he picked me up at camp and drove me to the office. After the first week, I systemized film deliveries at two a week. The rest of the time, my car and driver were at my command. Motor pool officers came and went. There was a constant shortage of transportation. Often the colonel himself couldn’t get a car,

but “Silent Soule” went right on in his Pontiac, never saying a word to anybody. Of course, it was too good to last, but it did, until my relief arrived. I told him to keep quiet; but after four days Simmons and the car disappeared, never to be seen again.

As reassignments continued, several enlisted men who had proved themselves in combat were promoted to lieutenant. One was John Schiller. He had just pinned on his bars when he was tapped, of course, for Sunday OD. It was the wrong day for a newcomer. He had barely taken over at Camp Robinson when two hundred replacements arrived, unannounced, hungry, with no place to sleep. Four hours later, with the last of them tucked away, he answered an alarm to find a tent in flames. Despite all efforts, it burned to the ground. The rest of the night passed peaceably. At 0700 the next morning, General Rupertus arrived to investigate the blaze and, while he was at it, make a full inspection. The general had just driven away when a young boy riding his bike in front of camp got his scrotum entangled in the springs of his bicycle seat! That was the final straw. Schiller staggered to his bunk and fell on it, face down. “If this is being an officer,” he groaned, “I want out.”

Melbourne’s healthful climate, the recreation, and the replacement program soon had a pronounced effect on the division. Many of us had lost as much as forty pounds on the island. Now we were nearly back to normal. The men in camp were happy and healthy, but our sick, 25 percent of the division at one point, still filled the hospitals. With replacements pouring in, each unit acquired a new face and personality. Most of the Old Breed were gone: killed, wounded, sick, or transferred home. With them went much of the precious experience we had gained. The young, eager replacements were as ignorant of combat as we had been six months before, but we were still the First Marine Division. No one forgot that for an instant. Not a week went by without formal reviews and presentations of decorations: Navy Cross, Purple Heart, Silver Star, Bronze Star. Demands for photographs soared.

At Balcombe, the division engineers constructed buildings, cases, and all kinds of special items. Lumber was scarce. Col. Herald

Rosecrans put it in one big pile and mounted a guard over it. Nobody—positively nobody—had access to it without a personal OK from the colonel. When General Rupertus needed a shelf for his office, his aide found a suitable piece of wood in the forbidden pile. Taking advantage of the general's rank—and a momentary absence of the guard—the aide made off with the piece at a dead run across the parade ground. But if the guard was off duty, the colonel was not. Spying a piece of his woodpile moving at top speed toward headquarters, he cranked the telephone and shouted an irate protest to the voice that answered. He had gone into some detail before he stopped for breath.

"Now, Rosey," purred General Rupertus, who had happened to answer the phone himself, "let's just simmer down and discuss this like gentlemen."

The general kept the wood.

With General Vandegrift away, General Rupertus was acting division commander. He took great interest in all of the activities of his staff, but intelligence was perhaps his favorite. The photographic desk still had a special fascination for him. On his morning rounds, he would slouch in the door, walk past the colonel, the major, and two captains to me. After putting down his swagger stick and his cap, he would perch on the corner of my desk. ("Don't get up."). This was the time to produce the preceding day's pictures of his activities: each medal presented, each unit inspected, each visitor received. He looked at them one by one, smiling to himself, rubbing his nose. Keeping those he liked, he sauntered past the other officers and out the door.

The situation was too good to waste. I had had such good luck with him in New River all those months ago that I decided to try again. For some time, I had yearned for an Army Air Corps photographic trailer. I knew that the Army had several of them in a depot up north. One of them would be ideal for us, but no such item or anything like it appeared in our Tables of Basic Allowances. With the best pictures from several days, I invaded the general's office. In the glow that followed his inspection of the prints, all eight-by-ten glossies and really good, I sprang the question.

"Trailer? Sounds like a good idea. Not too long, I hope. It would

have to fit into a ship's hold. . . . Really would help? . . . I'll see what I can do."

In wartime, a general can do almost anything. Two days later, I was aboard his personal plane en route to the Army Air Corps Supply Depot in Brisbane. There, I was whisked in to see the commanding officer. His room was empty. A low board stretched across the doorway, and from under the desk came strange noises. Suddenly a puppy emerged, yelping happily, followed by the colonel on his hands and knees. Red-faced, he stood up, brushed himself off, and extended his hand.

"Good afternoon, Lieutenant," he said rather sheepishly. "Birth-day present. Cute little rascal." He shoved the puppy into a corner and sat down at his desk with all the dignity he could muster. "You must be from General Rupertus," he continued. "I know what you want, and it's OK with me. Just sign for it, and it's yours. Nothing too good for the Marines, especially you fellows. You'll have to find some way to get it down there."

An hour later, the quartermaster had agreed to send it by rail (three changes of gauge on the way). My plane swooped down to Sydney for the night, and by midmorning the next day I was back in Melbourne. Ten days later, the trailer rolled into camp. We hooked up the electric and water lines and were in business, for the first time properly equipped to do our work.

The trailer greatly increased our ability to produce prints, but our workload soared as well. Privately owned cameras were still forbidden. In addition to our regular work, we faced a huge demand for pictures of individuals, award ceremonies, etc. Kodak Australasia did a roaring civilian business, but even they had trouble keeping up. We in the Photo Section were happy to do what we could, but the work required enormous amounts of supplies, to say nothing of time. The trailer was running around the clock. I talked to Colonel Buckley about it.

"Well," he said, "we'll just have to stop it. No more personal work."

"Not for anybody, sir?"

"Well, the general, maybe, but nobody else. Just say you're not authorized to do it."

“Do I say that to everybody?”

“Everybody. You’re not authorized. Period.”

The next day, Colonel James, chief of staff, came in to see me. He had never done that before. “Good morning, Soule,” he said. “General Rupertus tells me you’re the one to see. I want to get some pictures.”

Colonel Buckley, two desks down, heard him. He glanced quickly at me, then looked the other way. No help from him!

I drew a deep breath. “Colonel,” I said, “I’m sorry, but I’m no longer authorized to do that sort of work.”

Colonel James looked me in the eye. “Lieutenant,” he said, “you are hereby authorized.”

“Yes, sir.”

He smiled. “For tomorrow?”

“Yes, sir.”

As he walked out the door, Colonel Buckley laughed. “Nice try, Karl,” he said. “But I can see this isn’t going to work. You’ll just have to find some way to make pictures for everybody, first come, first served. OK?”

“Yes, sir.”

Something had to be done to lighten our load. The next week, after months of lobbying, I succeeded in spinning off our mapping and reproduction work. Henceforth, that would be a separate operation, leaving the Photo Section with only photographic work. Headquarters Marine Corps soon made the separation standard for the Corps.

In spite of all the improvements in personnel and supplies, headquarters officers had a problem. Ninety-one of us were quartered in a single large room—no squad bays, no separations of any kind, just one huge room with ninety-one cots. In officers’ country, it would never do to have taps or lights out. Fellows wandered in all night, drunk or sober, shouting, talking, stumbling over footlockers, turning on lights, and shutting them off. When the last of the late arrivals had settled down, it was usually about 0300. Two hours later, the early risers were up and about. Unless a man was both deaf and blind, sleep was hard to come by. After one particularly wild night, I set out to find something more private.

A large house next door might have an extra room. Screwing up my courage, I knocked, determined to talk to whoever appeared. It turned out to be an old lady with white hair and a ramrod-straight back, a twinkle in her eye, and an ear trumpet in her hand. What was that? A room? Quiet? Well now, she wasn't in the habit of talking to strangers, even less of renting rooms. "Quiet, you say? Well, there's a room out back, not very big, just tacked onto the house, you might say. No heat. It was for the maid, but, of course, with the war and all . . ."

Ten minutes later I had my private room, a tiny shack, to tell the truth, but dry, with running water and a private entrance. Four dollars a week would take care of everything. From then on, I slept soundly each night under warm blankets with nothing to disturb my slumber.

Food at camp was good, with a lot of chicken. After a couple of weeks, we learned that it wasn't chicken at all but rabbit. The men wouldn't touch it. It tasted the same as before; it was just the principle of the thing.

One day, the adjutant dropped by my desk with a big smile. "You're on your way home," he said. "I have orders to ship you back to Quantico as soon as your relief arrives."

He went on from there, but I lost it. My head was in the clouds. Home! I had hoped, of course. Captain Nelson said that I would be gone a year, then come back to Quantico. Here it was on paper! Suddenly I realized how lonely, how far away I was, how I had almost given up hope of going back. I guess we all had, that day we sailed out the Golden Gate.

"Of course," the major was saying, "you'll have to wait until your relief gets here, but that shouldn't be long. Here's a copy of his orders: Lt. Arthur S. Carter, USMCR, from headquarters, no less."

From then on, things were not the same. I watched the lists of incoming officers, even met some of the ships. I still had full responsibility for the section, but my mind raced ahead to my new job in Quantico and, of course, to home. But Able Sugar Carter didn't come. January became February, and still no sign of him. It was to be a long wait yet, but I didn't know that. Each day brought new hope, each ship new disappointment. All that time, the orders lay there, my ticket home, but I couldn't use it: "On the reporting of Second Lieutenant

Arthur S. Carter, Marine Corps Reserve, you will stand detached from your present station and duties, and will proceed to the United States.”

“On the reporting.” That was the rub.

The weeks wore on. The Intelligence Section was alive with fresh ideas. A new relief mapping unit was working on plaster and cardboard models of unnamed islands, mountainous islands with rough terrain and few beaches. Only the colonel knew their names, and he wasn’t talking. “Anyway,” Navy lieutenant Richard Kelsey said, “they probably are having us do the wrong ones, for practice, and to throw us off the real thing.”

The models were the first solid evidence that thoughts were turning to an operation. The division was far from ready, but we had clearly passed from a recuperative period to one of preparation.

Of course, there was recreation too. Summer was waning. Swimming gave way to long walks in the botanical gardens and trips to the nearby country. By April, it was much cooler. We changed to our green uniforms. Nights were clear and sharp, often with frost by morning. At Ballarat, there was even a little snow. On fine days I walked to work by way of the botanical garden. Nearly every time, at the same place on the walk, I met an Australian brigadier. He was tall with a clipped mustache, gray hair, and a general’s red cap and red collar tabs. He carried a swagger stick. I saluted smartly, with a cheerful “Good morning, Sir.” He smiled, touched his cap with his stick, and walked on. After a week or so, we sometimes stopped to talk a minute. Then, one day, he was gone. I never saw him again, but I often think of him, ramrod straight, bright ribbons on his chest, and that smile.

In May I was assigned to be a member of a court martial. The case was minor, one of scores that came up, but it was my first contact with military justice. Who was I to sit in judgment on a fellow Marine? I felt incompetent to do so, but in wartime much of military life is a study in incompetence. Men come into that life at a time of crisis, men who are not yet men, but boys suddenly grown older. One learns to kill, another to cook, another to interpret aerial photographs. After six weeks of frantic study, a man finds himself, perhaps, an expert on loading ships. This is bad enough on paper, but one morn-



ing his freighter comes in, and he starts to load her. He grows up then and there. Fortunate is the man who can do it loading a ship, cooking, or filling out forms. For them it's hard enough. But what of the man who finds himself telling another to risk his life, then and there, just by going to that tree, or behind that burned-out truck?

The books told us to be impersonal, but I couldn't talk to a helmet or a uniform. I talked to people. It was worst when I was the boss. If there was time, someone could advise me. Books told me what I ought to do or might do or what someone else had done in a similar situation. In the end, though, it was I who had to say yes or no, this way or that, forward or back. That was command, even on a small scale, the toughest job I ever had. It was always gnawing at me, all day, every day, for weeks, for months, for years. I never got used to it.

That court martial was command on a small scale. We had read the books and knew the rules, just as the man who had broken them did. As we studied his record, however, the rules didn't seem so certain anymore. This was like other cases but not the same. This man had won a Silver Star in four months of close combat. He had trouble at home, six thousand miles away. Who were we to say what should be done with him?

Major Richard Evans, president of the court, had a different view. "Why not us?" he asked. "Do you know anybody who can do it better? Anyway, we're stuck with it. We'll just do our best."

Sergeant Jay Ellis, as he stood at stiff attention before us, was a Marine's Marine—blond, broad-shouldered, muscular, with the Silver Star, two combat stars, and an expert marksman badge on his chest. For a fleeting moment, I hoped that we could let him off. We couldn't do that. He had admitted the offense: absent without leave, disorderly conduct, assault, and, in a barroom rampage, damage to civilian property in excess of a thousand dollars. The arresting MP testified, "There wasn't much left of the place." We had to set the sentence. It would be reviewed, of course, but we were the court. We adjourned to an unheated room and did our best to be fair. We handed down the sentence, and it was upheld: Demotion to private, payment of fourteen hundred dollars in restitution to the civilian owner of the bar, and confinement for thirty days. It changed Ellis's career, and it changed us. We grew a bit older and a little more understanding.

That case was one of dozens resulting from trouble with the local population. The Australian Ninth Division had come home from North Africa. Ugly incidents between them and us occurred frequently, always at night, usually in a bar. We Marines had taken their girls. That was bad enough, but we Yanks had money to burn—better pay to start with, and a lot of back pay to boot.

Another problem was that as long as we wore Army khaki it was impossible to distinguish us from the Army base troops who were in town and who, as Sergeant Waddick said, “Ain’t been no place, or fit nobody.” To be confused by the Australians with Army, rear-echelon Army at that, was too much. Help came from high places. First, the staff decided, we needed a shoulder patch, something to distinguish us and advertise our exploits. So was born the Marine Corps’ first shoulder patch, a blue diamond with a red 1. “Guadalcanal” in small letters ran the length of the 1. The Southern Cross was in white behind it. We were Army no longer.

We had earned campaign ribbons and battle stars too, but most of the men didn’t have them yet. We did have the George Medal. Lieutenant Colonel Twining felt that we deserved a special award, something unique. Night after night, the lights burned. Design after design was produced and discarded. Finally the right note was struck. On one side of a heavy bronze medal was a lonely Marine standing on an island surmounted by a cactus. (Cactus was the code name for Guadalcanal.) Above the cactus, an admiral’s hand was dropping a hot potato to the Marine below. At the bottom was an inscription in Latin: “Faciatur Georgius” (Let George do it). The reverse showed a cow with its rear end close to an electric fan and the inscription, “In fond remembrance of the happy days spent from August 7, 1942 to January 5, 1943. U.S.M.C.” The medal hung from a ribbon of dungaree cloth. It is one of my most cherished possessions.

The pride of the First Marine Division in Melbourne and its best representative to the civilian population was our band, directed by Maj. Leon Brusiloff. He had been bandleader at the Washington Theater in D.C. in vaudeville days. He knew how music should sound and what the public liked. His rule was tyrannical, but it paid off. He organized the band into regimental units, with an additional one at

headquarters. Brusiloff was responsible for all of them, but only on rare occasions did they play together as one big band.

Rotating the best musicians into headquarters, the major soon had a top-notch group of sixty pieces that played regularly for the division and the people of Melbourne. First came a successful concert in the town hall and several open-air performances in Kooyong Bowl. Encouraged, he improved and expanded his programs, presenting marches, light classical pieces, and popular numbers. At the end of each program, the "Marine Corps Hymn" brought the audience to its feet in a storm of applause.

Brusiloff's greatest success came on Australian War Bond Day. The division was invited to take part in a huge parade. The entire First Marine Regiment would march. Heading the column would be forty American flags, forty Marine Corps unit flags, and the full division band. The regiment drilled for a week—with much grumbling—and on the big day was primed to put on a glorious show.

But it was not to be. Australian parades, it developed, were different. Opposite the reviewing stand at town hall, two tiny bands took up their stations. One was from the fire department, the other from the police. Neither had more than ten superannuated players. To be fair, they played better than one could expect, but they did play, first one band, then the other, without power, distinction, or pause for the entire hour and a half that the parade was passing. As each marching band approached the reviewing stand, it stopped playing. Even the drums were silent. All music came from the small band on the curb. Brusiloff would have no chance.

The day was perfect, warm and clear. Collins Street was jammed with spectators. Every building was decked with flags. Thousands of people carried small Australian and American flags. Children perched atop their father's shoulders, or sat in groups along the curb. Unit after unit of Australian forces and civilian organizations passed, each with its band, each silent as it passed in review. It was a thrilling show of strength and power sorely needed in Australia in those dark days.

Then, far down the street, we saw our flags, a mass of red, white, and blue, flying triumphantly. A murmur ran through the crowd. Excitement grew as that star-spangled glory moved closer. Behind it

was Major Brusiloff, alone, imperious, followed by the drum major in all his grandeur. Behind him marched the full band, sixty pieces reflecting the sun in brilliant flashes of brass and silver. Only the drums were playing. In a moment, they too would cease.

But Brusiloff was not to be denied! As he crossed the line of silence, the drum major's stick shot into the air, the silver eagle atop it flashed in the sun, and the band crashed into the "Marine Corps Hymn." The crowd let out a roar that blew the wind out of the little police band. It stopped in midbar. Our band passed in brassy exultation. For me, it was one of the great moments of the war.

On 18 May 1943, Lieutenant Carter, my much-heralded, long-awaited, infinitely delayed relief, arrived. On 21 May, the changeover became official. My job with the First Division was done. It had been a year of experimentation, trial, and error—a great deal of all three, with more error than I cared to admit. The greenhorn lieutenant had grown up some, but it had been painful for everyone concerned.

When I joined the division, combat photography was untried, unproven. By the end of my duty, as our newsreel footage, training films, and still photos began to arrive in volume, the staff began to understand what I had been doing and the services that my section provided. We received a letter of commendation from Pathé News for our newsreel footage. I could count some solid gains in that year. If they were short of what they might have been, could have been, or should have been, the same could be said for every activity of the division. Perhaps, with luck, I would have a chance to try again. In the meantime, it was good-bye to all those who had lived through it. To have done even that was something.

## *Home Leave*

On 4 June 1943, I left Melbourne in *Hermitage*, a transport that had stopped on her way from India to the States. Old and rusty, she was loaded with civilians, mostly missionaries and refugees. I shared a large cabin with a young lieutenant of the Royal Australian Navy.

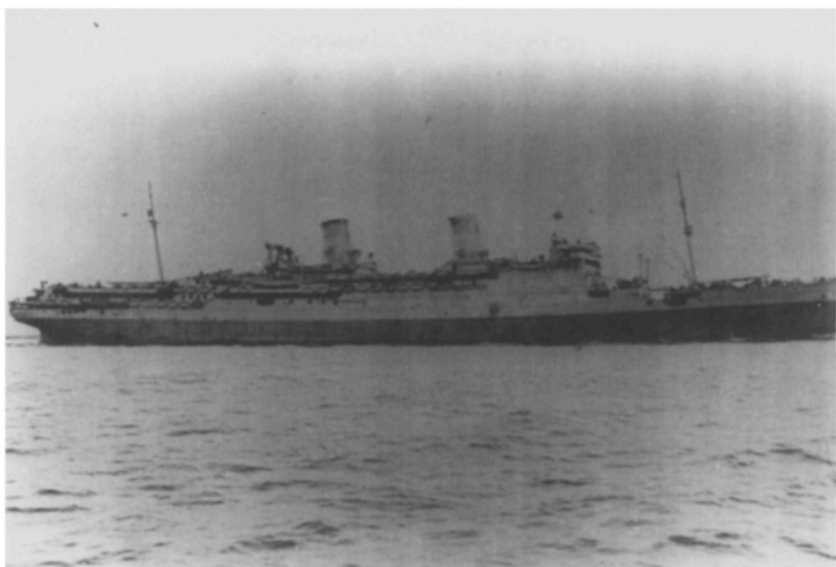
In spite of her run-down condition, *Hermitage* was fast and steady. We headed southeast toward Tasmania, traveling alone, with only minor zigzagging. Radio silence. Long lines for meals. Poor food. The captain, taking no chances on blackout regulations, ordered all decks cleared from 1600 of one day to 0800 the next. In June, that far south, it was dark all that time. Lights below deck were red, bright enough so that we could get around but not much else. That left only conversation and bed, twelve hours of sleep each night.

We rounded Tasmania, an island of blue-green rolling hills, and headed east. Well off regular shipping lanes, we stopped zigzagging. "With our speed," the captain said, "there's no chance of a sub's catching us, unless it's on our course, waiting . . ."

His voice trailed off, and we changed the subject.

A week out of Melbourne, we sighted the southern tip of New Zealand's South Island. Escorted by low-flying planes, we cruised up the east coast all day, within sight of the majestic Southern Alps. Winter snows came right down to the water. Jagged peaks towered in perfect white from the deep blue sea into a cloudless sky. Hour after hour that glorious panorama glittered in the sun. Huddled in a corner away from the cold wind, we watched in fascination. Late that afternoon, we entered Cook Strait and arrived in Wellington.

On my last visit, I had seen the city only in dreary rain. Now it sparkled in winter sun. We stayed two days, loading tons of canned



The *Hermitage* transported Lieutenant Soule from Melbourne to Wellington, and on to Los Angeles. Photo by Don Connors.

butter. Many more passengers came aboard. On 12 June, we put to sea again, headed east into a part of the Pacific almost never visited by ships.

Having so many civilians on board, many of them missionaries, put a crimp in the language of many Marines. Sharp four-letter words had become an integral part of our vocabulary. We made numerous slips, resulting in a lot of embarrassment. The civilians understood or pretended not to notice. By the end of the trip, we had made remarkable improvement.

One of the most pleasant times was daily hymn-singing in the lounge. A hundred or more of us gathered each afternoon. The missionaries started it, but before long, scores of Marines were taking part. We joined lustily in verses that were locked in the deepest memory of even the crudest, toughest of us.

"Shit, Reverend," said one the first day, "I don't know them damned songs."

But he did. They were there, and they came back: "Holy, Holy,

Holy,” “Onward Christian Soldiers,” “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” on and on.

“Hell,” said one sergeant toward the end, “those are damned good tunes!”

We went east for several days, then, as though we had reached a street corner, turned sharply left and headed north. “We’re due south of Los Angeles,” the captain said. “From now on, it’s north all the way.”

Soon we reached the tropics. Because of the heat and our remote position, we were allowed on deck after dark. There was no mistaking the latitude. The moon hung low, a huge red ball on the horizon. The sea was phosphorescent, glowing for half a mile around us. The Southern Cross sparkled above the mast. A few nights later, far off to the north, low in the sky but unmistakable, beckoned the Big Dipper. One family, who had lived most of their lives in the southern hemisphere, wept a little as they saw for the first time in almost half a century the clear, cold stars of the northern sky. Excitement swept through the ship. After all those months or years, after so many perils, so much despair, we were going to make it! War limits plans and hopes. In battle, we couldn’t look forward at all. In Australia, the next operation was always just around the corner. We dared not hope or plan. Now we were *really* going home, we, the guys from Guadalcanal, going home in one piece!

At dawn on 25 June, Catalina Island loomed up out of the mist. Eager messengers ran to the lounge. In a moment, hundreds of joyous travelers lined the rails. A plane flew low overhead, but we couldn’t see it. The ship inched forward up the long channel to San Pedro, port of Los Angeles. When I received my orders to the First Division, Captain Nelson told me I would be overseas “a year, give or take a couple of days.” It had been one year and two days since I sailed through the Golden Gate.

The commanding officer at Terminal Island Naval Base acted as though he had never seen a combat veteran before. He insisted that I take his station wagon. “Get over to the PX, Lieutenant, and get yourself your ribbons. For God’s sake, man, you gotta have those ribbons!”

I jumped into the car and, following his hazy directions, headed off across the base. Men shouted at me along the way. Why? I was

driving on the left side, that was why! I had been in Australia too long. I jerked the car to the right just in time to avoid a jeep coming the other way.

In 1943, the trip from San Pedro to Los Angeles was the most repulsive in the United States. I had made it years before and remembered it with horror, a ninety-minute trolley ride through grit and grime, oil smudge and junkyards. Now, as my first glimpse of home, it couldn't possibly be so bad. It was worse—the same junky trolley, the endless oil wells, the stink, the dirt, all the way into town. At Union Station, I boarded Santa Fe's Super Chief, and three days later I was home.

Rochester hadn't changed. Air raid sirens had been installed, which I found ridiculous. Many men were in uniform, but otherwise it was the same old place, a good place to be from, someone said, because it was always the same when you got back. Mother and Dad broke into tears. We were together again but had little to talk about. Rochester was a different world. Civilian life was different. I was different.

As a Guadalcanal veteran, I was greeted everywhere with respect and admiration. My shoulder patch, combat stars, Pacific ribbon, and Presidential Unit Citation drew second glances from every serviceman. I was in demand as a speaker, first for the National Guard unit, later for the Army Air Corps, then for the Marine Corps. Being home was a welcome break, but I was shirking. I owed it to everyone I had left in the Pacific to do something positive. I was glad to return to duty.

At Headquarters Marine Corps, in Arlington, friends from the First Division were everywhere, from General Vandegrift, now commandant, on down the line. Wally Nelson, as a captain in Quantico, had been instrumental in my assignment to the First Division. Now a major, he was in charge of photography for the entire Marine Corps. He wanted to show me around and introduce me to people, but I already knew everybody. I ended up introducing him to General Vandegrift and General Thomas. To my surprise, even casual acquaintances from the island greeted me like a long-lost relative. As a veteran of Guadalcanal, I was a member of the Old Breed. I belonged, and it felt good.



## *The Golden Days at Quantico*

On 3 August 1943, I reported in to Quantico. New buildings had gone up, but it was still the small post that I had come to love. The Photo Section occupied the entire top floor of Building 2009, and had grown to eighteen officers and a hundred men, far beyond our dreams of two years before. A still-picture section had been added, along with an animation department and production facilities. I didn't know anyone. Maj. Franklin P. Adreon Jr., officer-in-charge, was older than I, with thinning hair, a mustache, and a twinkle in his eye. He was what Marines call a "mustang." He had held every rank from private on up, so he knew the Corps. In addition, he had been a writer in Hollywood, and for a short time a movie stunt man. He was a live wire. He took me to the Ciné School. In my reports of a year ago, I had urged such a school, but I didn't know that it was in operation. I spoke briefly to the men about the importance of combat photography.

Afterward, the major invited me into his office. "Karl," he said, "as soon as you get squared away, I want you to take over that school and run it."

He outlined his Sector of Fire technique for combat photography: Men would work with specific units, instead of roaming freely as my men had done; they would record all action of their unit but coordinate their work with cameramen in other units. He was determined to avoid duplication, and to keep casualties to a minimum. When he had finished, he leaned back in his chair and put his hands behind his head. "Well, there it is," he said. "It's a tall order, but you're the man for it. Do it your way. If you need help, I'll back you up."

I got up to leave, but he stopped me at the door. "Karl," he said,

“do it right. A year from now, you’ll go out to the Third Division. You’ll be working with these same men.”

Again my course was set.

The next week I made captain. Coupled with my combat record, the new rank gave me considerable prestige, but at the time I didn’t realize how much. Thirty years later, Capt. Dwight Grant told me, “We were afraid of you. You were awesome.” Several officers in the Photo Section had come from Hollywood, the center of the universe for movies, where they held jobs of some importance. Now, this young captain—me—an outsider, showed up, with all the aura and authority of his service on Guadalcanal. That was a world those officers didn’t know. They didn’t want to even hear about it. Worse still, instead of using standard 35mm black and white motion picture film, I was pushing hard for 16mm color. The Corps needed it. Combat demanded it. Bud Lesser saw its importance, and so did Dwight Grant and the major, but they were exceptions.

As I found it, the Ciné School was not preparation for fieldwork. We had a fine classroom, and the students were promising, but there was no schedule of instruction. The single instructor was a studio cameraman with no idea of fieldwork, even less of military operations. The men were using heavy professional equipment that they wouldn’t find overseas. Before that first day was over, I returned to the quartermaster all our tripods and exposure meters. From then on, we would shoot as we would in combat, with cameras and film, no gadgets.

The school provided no physical preparation for combat. This was a serious shortcoming because men would be assigned to units at the last minute before an operation. They would go into battle within days of leaving Quantico. The first class, due to finish in two weeks, was woefully unprepared. I canceled their orders and extended instruction two weeks. That gave me a month.

Classes alone would never give the men the training they needed. I was determined that they would go overseas far better prepared than I had been. To accomplish that, they should participate in field problems of OCS (Officer Candidate School). Approval for that came hard. Just as in 1941, officers were distrustful of photography. It gave permanence to anything it recorded. The thought of mistakes being

caught on film and seen by someone in authority filled them with apprehension. I found a friend in Lieutenant Colonel Warner. "If you back us," I explained, "it will make all the difference in the world. We're all here to learn. Wouldn't it be helpful to you—and your men, for that matter—to see what is done wrong, as well as right?"

From that day on, my men took part in many problems under simulated combat conditions. They picked up a lot of military information, and learned how to work with a minimum of risk. They provided fine film records for the staff. Best of all, everyone got used to having them around and knew some of them by name. This paid off when they met again overseas.

At the start, my men were in poor shape physically. From the superb condition of boot camp, they had lapsed in short weeks into flabby softness. I was a physical fitness nut, pushing them to be ready for combat. I set aside one hour at the end of each day for exercise: calisthenics, obstacle courses, swimming, and conditioning runs. In my junior year at Harvard, I had taken Dave Hyde's course in challenge calisthenics. Today, we call it high-impact aerobics. Thirty of us met three times a week for fifty minutes of grueling, nonstop exercise. Dave had a doctorate in physical education. He knew how far he could push us, and he did push us, right up to the line. Nobody except him did all the exercises all the way through. We had to stop now and then, but he was on our tails every minute. It was hell while it lasted, but we felt great afterward. For Ciné School, I tried a similar but not nearly so tough program. Complaints were anguished and prolonged, but I took part in every session, often leading it. Cpl. Walter Spangler was resigned: "What the hell can you say when the Old Man does it too, *every damned day*?" It was rough, tough exercise, but it paid off in alertness, confidence, and fitness. More than that, we became a team. I was never privileged to work with finer men. I recognized it early and made full use of their talents not only then, but for years afterward.

Joe Franklin was older than I. A huge man of 230 pounds, he had played professional football. He had the sharpest mind that I had ever encountered, a thorough knowledge of photography, and a fine sense of humor. He detected sham or hypocrisy in an instant. He deflated an ego or demolished faulty reasoning with one remark. He

did it so adroitly, so amiably, that no one took offense for long. I kept him with me until he was wounded on Iwo Jima. After the war, we worked together on photographic trips in the American Southwest and in Central America.

Dick Handley was handsome, with a hearty handshake and a will to work. His organized mind put everything in its place, unerringly, quickly. I never had to tell him anything twice, never had to explain, never had to wonder if the job would be done. He, too, stayed with me through the war, and I have seen him often since. His is another friendship that I treasure.

Bob VanDerveer was boyish, a little wild at times; but I could count on him when something had to be done right. I kept him with me the rest of the war. Afterward, we made a film on Mexico together.

Al Walavich was a blond kid from Chicago, big and hard, with a square-cut jaw and a strong grip. He knew his job, and knew he knew. Confident and aggressive, he got what he went after. A fighter by instinct, slow to anger, quick to smile, he fit in well from the first.

Grant Wolfkill was a lanky, blue-eyed blond with a quick smile. He was so tall that when he enlisted, the examining medical officer told him, "If you really want to join the Marines, bend your knees." An artist by inclination and training, he had a keen photographic eye. His feeling for a mood or sequence bordered on the uncanny. He spoke his mind bluntly, too bluntly at times. He was hot-tempered and a master of acid remarks when they were called for, and sometimes when they weren't. He was wild, too, getting into one scrape after another. In combat, he was a man possessed. With never a hint of fear, he sought out the heaviest action and stayed in the thick of it for days at a time. After the war, he traveled with me for several years, then went on to do exceptional color cinematography in Asia for BBC and NBC. He was a jewel, hard, priceless.

Bob Watson was inseparable from Wolfkill, but an exact opposite. Quiet, shy, reserved, he was a conscientious, able cameraman. Eager to please and succeed, he would do anything with good cheer. He worshiped Wolfkill. Wolf, in turn, looked after him, though neither would admit it. Wolf was quick mentally. Bob was sometimes a little slow to get a joke but always plodded through. Once, he asked Wolf what movie was playing at the PX, a straight question that called

for a straight answer. Deadpan, Wolf shot back, "*Strange Love*, with Boris Karloff and Shirley Temple." He let Bob believe it for the full three seconds that it took for the spoof to get through. Bob moved easily and gracefully, like a dancer. He was efficient in everything he did, serious, yet always ready with a smile. Two years later, when he was killed on Okinawa, I felt like I had been hit by a truck.

Chuck Evans lit up a room when he came into it. Husky, blond, he was a typical Marine, strong and tough, alert, quick, with a ready laugh. He wore his cap on the side of his head, down over one eye. He had a self-assured walk. In his blues, he wouldn't have altered course for an admiral.

Chuck was moody, riding high for days or weeks, then plunging into a deep well of gloom, even depression. This concerned me. I tried to help but couldn't reach him in those moods. He took long walks alone. Once, however, I went along. We strolled out to Remount Pasture and down the old highway to Richmond, deserted now, its bridges blown for practice by demolition crews. Chuck didn't speak for an hour. We just walked, stopping at the bridges to look down into the dark, stagnant water. We watched the fish, the tadpoles, and a turtle on an upturned slab of concrete. But Chuck's mind was far away. His blue eyes stared out beyond the scrub trees. We crossed a bridge of saplings, a narrow bridge with rickety railings, and went on to where the old road joined Route 1. A dog ran out of a house, barking. Chuck smiled and patted its head but still said nothing, just turned, and we started back.

It began to rain, hard, bouncing on the pavement, dotting the pools with circles, almost roaring as it struck the dry leaves of the trees. We were soaked. Chuck's campaign hat, its ragged brim turned up at a jaunty angle, was a relic of the Old Corps. As rain washed over it, rivulets of water ran down his back.

It was dark when we returned to the barracks. The single clear bulb on the telephone pole cast a warm glow at the turn of the road. Indoors, a radio was playing. We stopped under the light. Chuck turned and looked up. The faraway look was gone. "Thanks, Captain," he said. "You were swell. I'm OK now."

"You're OK with me anytime, Chuck," I said. We shook hands and went our separate ways.

After that, we talked often. He rode high for weeks. I saw him on his way to work. I could spot that walk a mile away, that cocksure, straight walk that never varied in cadence. He was a Marine, and he loved it. He liked the spit and polish, the tradition, all of it. He cut his shirts down until they were almost skintight. His shoes shone, and he still pressed his shoelaces, just as he had at Marine Barracks at Eighth and I Streets in Washington. He did well there: made corporal in seven months, served on the interior guard at the White House and at the hideaway in Maryland. He had a chance for officers' school but postponed it to take some photographic training. When that was over, requirements had changed; he was no longer eligible. It bothered him. Was he right? What should he have done? He was haunted by the thought of what might have been if—oh, well, it was over and done.

Chuck never took advantage of our friendship. I was glad, because I valued it. There was a mutual respect between us that began when we wrestled in the gym after a class workout. He was fast and tough, and over a period of months we came out about even on falls. When we had worn ourselves out, we lay flat on the mat gasping for breath. Finally, one of us would pull the other to his feet, and we would drive back to the barracks. When we parted, he snapped to attention and saluted. He enjoyed it, and I was honored to return it.

In May, we had several combat exercises. Chuck was happiest in the field. One day, cold for May, we were resting in the warmth of noon at the Isle of Pines, a burned, blasted clump of tree skeletons. Chuck was spread out on the ground, leaning on his pack with his left elbow, his leggings loosened, his jacket open, his helmet off. We sat there in the warm sun and watched shells burst near a barn three hundred yards ahead. His eyes sparkled. He was outdoors, and he was happy. Taking a case from his pocket, he pulled out a black cigar. He knew I didn't think much of smoking. He cast a sly glance in my direction as he lit it, and smiled out the corner of his mouth. He took a long draw, blew the smoke into the air, and watched it disappear, all the time watching me. He shifted the cigar to the other side of his mouth with his tongue. He was proud of that maneuver. His lips parted in a smile, but he held the cigar firmly in his teeth. "Well," he said, "no rise from the captain."

He took the cigar out of his mouth, tamped out the glow, and put the cigar back in the case. Picking up his pack, he strode off down the hill, that cocky walk there as always.

A week later, I went to the rifle range for several days. I didn't see Chuck for a while. When I did, he was down in the dumps again. Girl trouble. Outdoor duty might help, so I assigned him to the range on the next detail. Now he had something to live for and a mark to shoot at. I had made three hundred. He was sure he could better it. Day after day, he came back from the range, his campaign hat down over one eye, his shooting glove over the muzzle of his rifle. His eyes gleamed, and his face was tanned. He snapped in at night and cleaned his rifle twice a day. He was a hotshot, a sure bet to make expert. On prerecord day he shot 316.

On record day, he went to pieces and ended up with 285, a low sharpshooter. I saw him coming up the stairs, the rifle almost limp on his shoulder, his hat on the back of his head, his eyes on the deck. I knew what had happened before I heard. That afternoon, he had that faraway look again. When work was over, I went to the outside stair landing. The men came out, but not Chuck. I waited. After a long time, he came, and started down the stairs.

"Chuck," I said.

"Yes, sir." He stopped but didn't turn or lift his head.

"Want company, Chuck?" I asked.

He stood there, silent.

"Come and talk a bit."

He turned and came up beside me. We leaned on the railing, our right feet on the lower board. The afternoon was hot. Heat waves shimmered over the railroad tracks, and the Potomac was deep blue. A plane warmed up at Brown Field. We talked between long pauses. The sun was low, and locusts were singing. We walked back to the barracks together and stopped again at the curve in the road under the solitary bulb. It wasn't lit yet but would be soon. The sergeant of the guard sat on the front steps, Jessie, the bulldog, in plump and ugly dignity beside him. Chuck turned to me, and looked up. "Thanks, Captain. I'm OK."

Chuck left us soon after that. He fought at Peleliu and had a rough time there and at Okinawa, but he came through both opera-

tions safely. I lost track of him after that. Many years later, I found him in California, the same Chuck, still husky, still with that smile, that twinkle in his eye, and that cocky walk.

I would have entrusted my life instantly to any of the men in that grand group. We knew from the first that we were fortunate beyond all hope or expectation. One afternoon, Joe Franklin, philosophical as always, stood beside me on the landing and looked out over the Potomac. "Captain," he said, "we're the luckiest people in this whole wretched war. We have the best men, the best friends anyone could ask for, and we know it, right now. When we look back later, let's remember we knew it at the time and appreciated it even then."

As the weeks slid by, I seldom left the post. Quantico suited my mood perfectly. "Join the Marines and see the world" worked in reverse for me. After decades of travel, I could stay in one place for a year. My favorite weekend pastime was long walks in the old maneuver area, a quiet woods where I could be alone. Other times, I walked down to the dock on the Potomac. One sunny Sunday morning I found General Cates there. He was Commandant, Marine Corps Schools, but that day he was in old civilian clothes, seated on an inverted pail, fishing. Next to him, chatting happily, was a young corporal, also fishing.

"Good morning, General," I said, realizing as I spoke that I had destroyed his anonymity.

"Good morning, Soule," he replied. "Got a pole? Come fish with us."

The corporal, embarrassed, got up to leave. "Sit here, Captain."

"Where are you going, son?" Cates asked. "Don't leave me alone. I need your help with all these fish we're not catching."

I made a hasty retreat.

One Saturday I walked over to the railroad station. A passenger train pulled in headed north. The coaches were old, the windows fogged and dirty. Every car was jammed. A major standing nearby looked at it unhappily. "Captain," he said, "every time I feel like going to Washington, I come down here, watch a train come in, take a good look, and go home to bed."

I did just that.

Fall went quickly. In the red evenings of October, leaves rattled on the lawns. The high, sweet notes of "Evening Colors" hung in the



air for minutes. In the crisp mornings of November, frost covered the grass, and “Morning Colors” sounded sharp and clear. I remember the rain, the wind, the clouds, the fog, and always, the men—my same crew, but, on the post as a whole, hundreds of new faces every few weeks, eager, young, determined, all looking alike under a barracks cap. I enjoyed meeting men on the street. Saluting always appealed to me, at least the way Marines did it. I have seen men cross the street to avoid a salute, but to me it was a pleasure and an honor. It was good to hear that sharp “Good morning, sir” or “Good evening, sir.” I made a point to reply by name if I knew the man, otherwise by rank. I took special pleasure in saluting senior officers. Some of them took saluting too seriously. Maj. Gen. Phillip Torrey, commanding general of the post, once had his driver stop the car so that he could personally chew out a poor corporal who hadn’t seen him pass.

Brig. Gen. Pedro Augusto del Valle was just the opposite. I had known him on Guadalcanal, where he commanded the Eleventh Marines. He told me once that he noticed me the first time we met because I was the only person in the Corps who pronounced his name correctly. (He was from Puerto Rico.) The general was a favorite of the men, with good reason: He took great personal interest in them. One day, he invited me to ride with him in his official car to headquarters for a meeting there, then to the opening of the Statler Hotel (now the Hilton) at Sixteenth and K Streets in Washington. It was going to be quite a party. General Vandegrift would be there, and a lot of people from Guadalcanal.

As we left the post, the general asked the driver, “Where is Donaldson [his regular driver] today?”

“I don’t know, sir. I got this job just a few minutes ago. This is supposed to be my day off, but Donaldson didn’t show.”

“This is your day off?”

“Yes, sir, supposed to be.”

“We’ll have to do something about that. Turn around. Back to the barn.”

The motor pool produced another driver, but the general was still concerned about the plight of the first driver. “Son,” he said, “you mustn’t waste your day off. Do you want to go to Washington? Get in.”

When we reached headquarters, the general turned to the driver. "Take this man anywhere he wants to go. Just be at the Statler at 2300 to take us back to Quantico."

Popular or not, there were too many generals, too many officers on the post. The men complained about saluting. It was hard, they said, to keep up. After a week of heavy griping, I invited the two who had grumbled most to walk with me to the PX. "Now count," I said, "and see who salutes more, the men or the officers." In four blocks, they got the point. A man salutes every officer he meets, but officers are few compared with the number of men whose salutes the officers must return.

Officers' Country was up on the hills: fine new apartments and old but comfortable houses from World War I. Married officers awaiting quarters were assigned bed space in an old warehouse. They weren't charged for those accommodations and shouldn't have been. The building, a World War I shack of wood and tar paper, was just one big room with fifty bunks. It overlooked the airfield, where planes roared in and out all day. When they began to fly regular dawn patrols, the officers held a council of war. The next day at 0510, as the planes took off, the fellows phoned the colonel commanding the field.

A sleepy voice answered, "This is Colonel So-and-So."

"Colonel," the caller said crisply, "we want you to know your planes have departed as ordered."

After four days of that, the patrol went out at 0700.

Bachelor officers lived down by the railroad in Cinder City, so called because it was built of cinder blocks. Some said it was because cinders from passing trains covered everything around it. It wasn't fancy, but it was dry and warm. I shared a room with Capt. Dwight H. Grant, also of the Photo Section. He was away on orders a great deal, so I had the place to myself most of the time.

Food was excellent but too plentiful. Technical Sergeant Cherbonnier, a French chef of the old school, turned out chicken baked in wine and other exotic dishes. True to his profession, he banished condiments from the table, and turned back the quartermaster's pies at the door. He would bake his own. On that basis, feeding two hundred men was more than he could handle. After a few weeks, he was transferred to the general's mess, where life

was more relaxed. With him gone, our food quality went downhill. There was still too much, especially at noon. We deserted to the PX soda fountain or the Marine Sundry Shop in town. There the ceiling fans buzzed lazily, and the milk shakes were a meal in themselves.

Each Saturday morning, the Schools Detachment had a period of military instruction for all hands, with rifle inspection first. One day I drew the duty. My attitude on rifles was lax. I didn't believe in the white-glove routine. If a piece was clean and cared for, that was good enough for me. Corporal Anderson's rifle, however, just wouldn't pass. The barrel was so plugged I couldn't see through it. Anderson was an animation artist from Walt Disney Studios but had been to boot camp and knew better. I threw the piece back to him and told him to see Mr. Monaghan.

Warrant Officer William Monaghan had retired from regular service years before but had been called back for the duration. He was respected by everyone for his tact and his intimate knowledge of the Corps. We admired him for his fairness, his common sense, and the way he bent regulations now and then. A redheaded Irishman, he had the good nature expected of him.

Anderson cleaned his piece and presented it to Mr. Monaghan. Monaghan, too, often winked at a little lint here and there, but this rifle was still in bad shape. He tossed it back. Anderson tried again, this time presenting it for inspection with an air of hurt feelings. Monaghan passed it; then, in his most fatherly tone, asked, "Anderson, why is it so difficult for you to keep your rifle clean?"

The corporal pulled himself to his full six feet of height, threw out his chest, and replied loud and clear, "Mr. Monaghan, sir, I abhor firearms!"

Monaghan never got over that. "It just goes to show," he said, "what can happen in a war."

I saw quite a bit of Monaghan, usually to straighten out paperwork, but occasionally to get one of my men out of trouble. Wolfkill contributed more than his share of problems. It got so bad that when I came into Monaghan's office, he would ask, "What's Wolfkill done now?"

Sometimes officers got into trouble. Capt. Julian "Bud" Lesser, during a dull bit of duty one night, accidentally fired his pistol. The

bullet tore a jagged one-inch hole in the concrete ceiling of Monaghan's office. We swept up the bits of concrete, plugged the hole, and hoped no one would notice. Bud, however, dutifully entered the incident in the log: "Expended one round."

The next day Monaghan said, "You didn't have to do that. It's OK."

But it wasn't OK. If he had sent the report on up the line, it could have become a serious matter. Monaghan helped so many of us. When I was in that office fifty years later, the bullet hole was still there, painted over but still there.

Monaghan could be business too, as Chuck Evans could testify. Chuck considered himself something of an authority on weapons. One day, in a cocky mood, he challenged Monaghan on a detail of the Thompson submachine gun. After class, Monaghan took him to a basement room. "Now," he said, "you can prove how much you know." He stripped a Thompson and a BAR (Browning automatic rifle), dumped all the parts together into a pail of kerosene, and put out the lights. "There," he said. "Call me when you've got them back together."

It took him three hours, but Evans succeeded.

Ciné School was running well. I kept the classes small, and the men learned fast. Lieutenant Colonel Adreon's (he had just been promoted) Sector of Fire technique called for a lot of additional work and knowledge on the part of cameramen. They were proud to be using Officers Class problems in map reading and to be doing them well. In combat problems, they knew what the staff was talking about and who was where on the maps. They could ask intelligent questions and understand the answers. They were special now, and they knew it.

One of my problems was to get them to talk to officers, ask questions, and even tell them what to do, for picture purposes. They walked a fine line. They couldn't push too hard or appear cocky. Some of them, direct from boot camp, were petrified even speaking to an officer, let alone requesting—oh, so gently—that he do something again, or face this way or that. Some of the younger, greener kids were even terrified of me. More than one trembled in his first interview. My job was to build confidence so that each man could more easily assert himself.

That was where our exercise periods helped most. I had no bars on my dungarees. The men could talk to me, throw me, or whatever the game called for. I was as hard and quick as they were in many things, but each of them could best me in something. I could fall just as hard as the next man. When the "Old Man" (I was twenty-seven) couldn't do something quite so well or so fast as they, I was, after all, an old man. None of them ever took advantage of the situation. Not once was there a question of who was boss, bars or no. If it had been otherwise, I would have scuttled the whole program.

We used the post swimming pool two periods a week. Several of my men couldn't swim. Supposedly they had learned in boot camp, but, of twenty men, five couldn't swim a stroke. In amphibious warfare, this was downright dangerous. In a blitz course of five sessions, four of them learned, but not S.Sgt. Donovan Raddatz. A career Marine, he had just returned from a long tour of duty in Samoa. A slight blond with blue eyes, he was a top cameraman with a lot of savvy, a fine sense of fair play, and a fiery will to succeed. He had learned photography through years of work, but the new technique called for many more skills, so he was with us, first as a student, later as an instructor. Raddatz was a lot of things, but he was not a swimmer. His fear of water bordered on the pathological. After long coaxing, we finally got him into the pool. Instantly every muscle in his body tensed. The cords in his neck stood out like ropes. His face went dead white. I was frightened. As calmly as I could, I ordered him out of the water. Enough for that day. We tried twice more. After the third time, Raddatz came to my office. He wore a crisp, new uniform. His hair was perfectly combed, and he carried his barracks cap under his arm. I knew as I looked up that this was something special.

"Does the Captain have a moment?" Raddatz was Old Marine Corps. That third-person form of address still slipped out now and then on formal occasions.

"Certainly, Raddatz. Stand easy."

He relaxed a little but was still stiff. His lips were tense. His voice wavered, but his clear blue eyes looked straight into mine. "The Captain knows," he began. He halted, then blurted it out all at once, "Dammit, sir, I'd go through hell for you; but please, sir, not water!"

The wind went out of him. He was limp, but his eyes were still

clear. Only that morning, I had discussed his fright with the post surgeon. He felt Raddatz had had enough.

“OK,” I said, “we’ll forget about the water.”

Wolfkill was different. He couldn’t swim, but the first day, he climbed the ten-foot tower and leaped gaily into eight feet of water. He popped to the surface, eyes shut, arms flailing. Two men grabbed him and pulled him out. “God,” he said, “that was keen!” After two more lessons, he was the gamest swimmer in the group.

During our last swim period, a hurricane was off the coast. We had no wind yet, but rain was coming down almost too hard to believe. I don’t know what streak of perversity made me do it—maybe something one of the men said—but I decided we would swim anyway. After all, we would be in the water. It was just orneriness on my part, pure and simple, but we went.

Naturally, there was some reluctance, so it was up to me to be first, first in the outdoor shower, which was like ice, and first into the pool, which was warm. We had a lark once we got in. The men boasted about it for weeks afterward: “All you chickens sitting in the barracks, and we were out there drowning!”

Partly because of the pool incident, we became known as “Soule’s Commandos.” There was derision in the term at first, but there was envy, too. Many in the Photo Section, officers and men, longed for action. Ciné School was as close as they could get to it. After all, doing animation or cutting film was a long way from what a Marine was supposed to do. Corporal Berenson talked to me about it.

“It’s OK for you, Captain. You’ve had it already, been shot at, ribbons, all that stuff. Here I sit wearing the same uniform, sitting behind a goddamn desk, drawing Mickey Mouse for training films!” He had a point.

In spite of a few snide remarks, Ciné School attracted a continual influx of fine men, including some from other departments of the section. Bud Lesser, Dwight Grant, and a couple of other officers joined us for night compass courses and combat problems but soon lost interest. Morrie Abrams joined us full time. I was delighted to have him. He was one of the first people that I met in Quantico back in 1941. After twenty years in motion pictures, he knew more about cutting film than I could ever learn. The urge that had led him to

leave it all and enlist in the Marine Corps now called him to duty overseas. That meant becoming a cameraman. He was a master technical sergeant, as high as he could go as an enlisted man. He had a good assignment in the editorial department. He was overage for combat, but Morrie had enlisted to fight a war. As he told the colonel—who agreed with him—“Quantico is a hell of a place to fight a war.”

Older than any of the staff, outranking everyone in sight but me, Master T.Sgt. Morris Abrams came to class as a private. He worked harder than anyone else, and with more enthusiasm. Nothing was beneath his dignity. Nothing escaped the notice and questioning of his agile mind. He learned fast and well, an inspiration to all of us.

Bill Lundigan, straight from Hollywood, where he had played feature roles, burst on the school as our most handsome, most vibrant personality. He had a quick eye for pictures, worked hard, and never asked favors. Time and again, hints were dropped that I should go easy on Lundigan, let him off this or that, but Bill didn't want that. He took things as they came.

By now, the Tarawa operation was over. Norm Hatch and Obie Newcomb were the first cameramen to take part in a sharply contested landing. Their combat pictures created a sensation across the country, especially in Ciné School, and their film won an academy award. We greeted them as heroes and hung on every word of their report.

But Tarawa was something more. It showed starkly the great difficulty of the road to Tokyo. If one small island cost so much, what would be the price of victory? We shuddered as we looked ahead: Saipan, Guam, the Philippines, God knew how many more islands before we could even think of Japan itself. The Corps stiffened. Word came down to toughen training. All schools on the base increased physical exercise, but they still did less than we had been doing for months.

The word came also that there were two kinds of Marines: those who had been overseas and those who were going. Draft after draft left for the Pacific. Some men volunteered; others went only after appeals in all directions. Some scurried for cover, often into the nearest and longest course of instruction they could find. Our twelve-week course was highly desirable. We had a steady stream of

applicants, men who had bounced from one class to another, sometimes for almost two years. Franklin and I could spot them a block away. With only six men in each class, we had no room for anyone who would not produce.

Private First Class Jackson refused to be turned down. He had been on the post for more than a year, first in one class, then in another, never finishing anything yet not actually failing. When he came to me, I had no room and told him so. His record showed no experience in photography. An interview convinced Franklin and me that he wasn't qualified or even really interested. Moreover, neither of us would want to rely on him in a tight spot. Our answer was no.

Three days later, the colonel called me to his office. "What's the story on this man Jackson?" he asked. I told him, and he nodded. "You're sure? You don't want to change your mind?"

"No, sir, I don't."

"OK. That's good enough for me."

"What's this all about, Colonel?"

"Jackson has influence at post headquarters. The chief of staff called me this morning about him. But if you say no, Karl, that's the answer as far as I'm concerned. I'll back you up. I just wanted to be sure *you* were sure."

That wasn't the end. In the weeks that followed, the colonel received two more phone calls and a full case of Scotch whiskey. A month later, he got a call from Headquarters Marine Corps, and eventually from the office of the Secretary of the Navy. He never wavered. He kept me posted on each development—even gave me a bottle of the Scotch—but not once did he ask me to reconsider. That was loyalty when the chips were down. I don't know what happened to Jackson, but he never entered Ciné School. (Joe Franklin, who read this manuscript, noted, "Just as the colonel was standing behind you, you were standing behind me. On that last day, when you asked me—almost, I'm afraid, with a bit of hope in your voice—if I was sure about the man, and I said I was positive we didn't want him, it was exactly 1100. I added then, with a perfectly straight face, that we would be hearing from Washington during the noon hour. You gave me that funny look you reserved for my more dubious statements. The call came from Washington at 1250.)



More and more men were leaving for overseas. Orders were orders, and the men went out, all but one. He was an old-timer at Quantico, for years beyond recollection in charge of the plumbing. He knew every pipe and where it went. He knew all there was to know about the steam and water lines, things that were not in blueprints, things that had never been written down. He hadn't been overseas, so off he went. He almost made it, too, but just before his ship left San Francisco an urgent dispatch from Washington ordered him back. The Marine Corps, or Quantico, at least, had found an indispensable man.

One problem for the Photo Section was disposal of film that was of no further use. Most of it was classified secret or top secret. Regulations required that it be burned, but much of it was explosive cellulose nitrate. At first, we burned small lots in the open air at the dump. It was slow and had to be done so frequently that it was not practical. One day, Evans and Handley drove down to Reclamation with a whole truckload of nitrate film, determined to let it go all at once. The air was calm after a heavy rain. No danger of fire. At the dump, however, a new officer was in charge. If something was to be burned, he ordered, it must go into the incinerator.

"But Lieutenant," Evans protested, "this material is explosive. We always burn it outside."

"Explosive? All the more reason to put it in the incinerator. Just drive up and dump it in number six. It's empty. It'll take it all."

"But—"

"No buts. Into the incinerator, and be quick."

Handley backed up the truck while Evans ran for a telephone. If he could get to me or the colonel before that crazy officer turned on the gas, there might be a chance. Handley pondered the odds. If he dumped fast enough and drove like hell, he might get away before it let go. Maybe the incinerator was cool enough that the film wouldn't ignite. He glanced at the lieutenant, who made a sharp, quick gesture toward the incinerator. Evans was nowhere in sight. Well, if that was what the lieutenant wanted, that's what he'd get. Handley dumped all three hundred pounds.

In a phone booth across the street, Evans had reached the colonel. From his window, the colonel could see the incinerator building

with its tall chimney. The truck was racing away. "Let me talk to that lieutenant," he said. "Never mind, there it goes now!"

With a roar heard all over the post, flames shot a hundred feet out of the chimney. Smoke poured from the windows. People ran in all directions. The building disappeared in a cloud of smoke and fire. When it lifted, the building and chimney were still there. The truck was out of harm's way. A couple of men were picking themselves up. A few windows were broken, but no one was hurt. After that, we burned all film in the open.

In May, the Photo Section, in a full-scale test of the Sector of Fire technique of combat photography, produced a film report on a three-day maneuver, ROC problem number 1,000. Planning began with a conference in the colonel's office. Most of the officers were there, even some who would not take part directly. We discussed who would be responsible for each phase. At one sticky point, Capt. Barry Shipman, who must have known better, blurted out, "Well, just sluff it off on somebody else. After all, that's what rank is for."

The atmosphere turned to ice. The colonel's face flushed dark red. Barry sank deep into his chair. After what seemed forever, the colonel cleared his throat. "That's enough for today, gentlemen. Tomorrow, same time, right here."

We filed out. Barry remained with the colonel. I never saw him again.

Some Photo Section personnel had never been on a field problem. One of them, Sgt. Richard Brooks, was a man of enormous talent and technical knowledge but out of place in the Marine Corps. Assigned to write the script, he moved out with headquarters, grumbling darkly. My unit left an hour later. The day was bright and clear, deceptively warm. In late afternoon, clouds blew in. The temperature dropped thirty degrees, and a cold rain started. By dark, we were chilled clear through, huddling in shelter halves and cursing the no-lights order that forbade a fire. At 2100, word came down that fires could be used until midnight. We got one going and, for two hours, were fairly comfortable, telling stories and getting at least half of our bodies warm while the other half froze. At midnight, we put out the fire and returned to our shelter halves, wet and cold.

An hour later, I awoke to find Brooks's fire still burning, with several men huddled around it. "Brooks," I yelled, "the colonel ordered all fires out. Kill that one, and make it quick."

"Not this fire, Captain," he called. "Not this fire!"

I must have turned purple. I scrambled from my blanket and rushed toward him. There was Brooks, side by side with the colonel, swapping stories.

"Karl," said Captain Willey when I told him about it, "Brooks is going to go a long way."

He did. He wrote a book about Quantico, *The Brick Foxhole*, and made it into a Hollywood movie. A few years after the war, he became a topflight writer and director. He made, among others, *The Brothers Karamazof*, *Elmer Gantry*, *Lord Jim*, and *In Cold Blood*.

Summer in Quantico was hot and sticky. Our uniforms wilted in an hour. The post laundry starched them so heavily that the pants could stand up by themselves. Getting into them was a struggle. Even so, they sagged by lunchtime. Sentries at the main gate changed their shirts every four hours. Many afternoons, I was soaked in perspiration from just walking down the street. I wanted to wring out my skin.

On 4 July, almost too late to do me any good in Quantico, I got a military driving license. Officers were not supposed to drive. Was it beneath our dignity, or did it give us too much mobility? Shamelessly, I trumpeted my combat experience and my need to "supervise operations in the field." Captain Bushnell, an old friend from the First Division, finally relented and signed the license himself, pointing out that it was not valid for driving tanks. The next Saturday, I checked out a jeep from the motor pool and was off on a solo expedition.

What better place to test four-wheel drive than on the Power Line, a series of sharp ridges, lots of ups and downs, and no road? We had made countless conditioning runs up there. Well, the jeep had its limitations. Halfway up the sharp second ridge, it bogged down. No amount of wheel spinning or rocking did any good. I was stuck. Mud and dirt flew in all directions. The tires smoked. I was still stuck. After serious digging, I finally worked the jeep free and sneaked

back to Cinder City. There, hidden from the street, I washed the vehicle, polished it until it looked like new, and returned it to the motor pool.

“Captain,” the lieutenant said, “thanks for taking such good care of your vehicle. It looks better than it did when you took it out. Come back any time. . . . By the way, sir, I saw you coming down from the Power Line. It was a real mess then.”

My year in Quantico was almost over. Enough men had been trained. In mid-July, I got word through the grapevine that orders were on the way. The First Division, about to attack Peleliu, urgently needed photographers, the best we had. I could pick the men, but there was no question: Evans, Franklin, Herring, Lundigan, and Wolfkill would go. I worked with them quietly for two weeks and helped them straighten up their affairs. On 3 August, the orders came. I choked up when I told them, and I think they understood. They were eager to go. I wouldn’t have held them back for the world. We laughed and joked a bit; then they were gone. Twelve days later, they landed with their units on Peleliu in some of the heaviest fighting of the Pacific war. All of them came home. I thanked God that I had been able to help prepare them for it, though no one is ever fully ready.

With the school all but closed, my departure could not be far off. Raddatz asked to go with me.

“You can’t do that, Raddatz,” I said. “You’ve been overseas. You’ve had yours. Stay here and enjoy it.”

“I know, sir, but that’s not what I want. I want to go with you, wherever it is. I can’t take it around here anyway. The war’s not here. I’ve had all this training. Aren’t you going to give me a chance to use it?”

“You really want to go? You’ve been out once. It’ll be rougher this time, Don, a lot rougher. We could get hell kicked out of us.”

“Yes, sir, but I want to go. You’ve been out before. You’re going again. Why can’t I?”

I didn’t have an answer to that.

“I’m counting on the Captain to fix it up,” he said. “You just can’t go without me.”

“OK, you’re in. But start packing. It won’t be long.”

Ciné School closed. Raddatz and I left to join the Third Division on Guam. From what the colonel said, we couldn't get there soon enough. VanDerveer was already there, headquarters promised to send Franklin as soon as possible, and Handley would come later. That would give me my key people.

I left Quantico on 7 August, one year and three days after my arrival, on schedule as usual. As I left the colonel's office, he put his arm on my shoulder. "When you get through out there, Karl, we want you at Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force, at Pearl Harbor. Take care of yourself, boy. We'll be looking for you as soon as your show is over."

With that, I was off to my new job. It would take all we had. Some of us would not come back.

## *Guam and the Third Division*

In 1944, flying was still a rather primitive business. Most commercial flights were on Douglas DC-3s. From Rochester, my plane stopped in Buffalo and Detroit on the way to Chicago. Between there and San Francisco were stops in Omaha, Denver, Salt Lake City, and Reno. It was an all-day project, sixteen hours, but still a marvel, four times faster than the best train.

San Francisco is alone among cities, a white city of wooden houses and tall buildings, a steep city of sharp hills. It's a sentimental city that clings to its cable cars and memories of "The Fire." It's a city of water and sky, green parks, fog, and curling combers on the beach. It's a Chinese city, an American city, a liberty town for the fleet. It's a city of fine restaurants and many bars, tall apartments, long piers, and mighty bridges.

Once before, I had sailed out to war through the Golden Gate. Now the time had come again. In the long, gray twilight, as the fog rolled in, I walked for miles. Empty streets were dark with war. I wasn't lonely or sorry for myself, just concerned. I had been in combat and had come home. I had smelled the jungle. I had crouched, congealed by fear, as bombs crashed around me. Would that make it easier this time, or harder? Had I used up my luck? I had proved to myself I could take it. Would I have to prove it again? Could I—again? I crossed and recrossed the city, not knowing or caring where I went.

But San Francisco was other things too: reporting in for transportation, lunch at Fisherman's Wharf, visits with friends. I stayed that week with Mr. and Mrs. Harold Frick, whom I had met years before in Alaska. From their home on Telegraph Hill, we watched ships come and go—transports, warships, freighters, tankers—all

somber gray, sometimes etched against the blue, at others all but lost in fog. On a clear day, we could see men along the rails. They were featureless at that distance but still individuals, each with his thoughts, fears and hopes. One day I saw a long, sleek transport. Somehow, I knew it was mine.

My last night in town I attended a party on Nob Hill. I don't recall how or why, but there I was in an elegant apartment twenty stories up with a butler at the door, a dowager hostess, a huge cake, drinks, and a view of the bay. It was unreal, a slice of high society before the war, society with a capital S. In my uniform, orders in my pocket, I stepped out onto the balcony. The damp night air was cold but clear. Even in the dimout, I could trace the outline of the bay. On the right, almost hidden behind some buildings, was my ship. The time had come.

*General Collins*, built as a transport, provided accommodations without comfort, transportation without frills. She was fast, but she rolled. We weren't allowed outside after dark. Below decks, red lights provided the only illumination. It was a cold, grim trip.

Hawaii! I had been in the Pacific four times, but this was my first visit to these islands. The Pearl Harbor BOQ at Hospital Point was a relic of World War I pressed into service. The screens were tattered and the plumbing leaked, but it was home until I shipped out. I dumped my gear, and took off. Sam Meyer, my oldest friend, was stationed at top secret FRUPAC (Fleet Radio Unit, Pacific) in Makalapa. We hadn't seen each other for two years. We explored Honolulu, walked the length of Waikiki, mingled with the swarms of servicemen on Kalakaua Avenue, then broke away to the quiet of Foster Gardens. Sam knew every plant, but we just lay on the grass, and talked about other things. Next day, at Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force, I ordered supplies, arranged transfer of some personnel, and got my orders. They read FAGAIRTRAINS (first available government air transportation). With seven others, I was off to FRAY. We weren't supposed to know that was the code name for Guam.

Airplanes are efficient transportation, but they rob passengers of all sense of distance. To me, the western Pacific will forever be

twenty-four hours wide, not endless days by ship. I have since crossed it in a fraction of twenty-four hours, but I still think of it in terms of that first trip. Four hours from Honolulu, we landed at Johnston, a carrier-shaped island so small, so short that it had to be lengthened to accommodate planes. There were Quonset huts, anti-aircraft guns, Marines black with the sun, and everywhere the blinding glare of light reflected from the sea, the coral, and the buildings.

Eight hours farther on, we made a refueling stop at Kwajalein, a green and white atoll anchored in a blue sea. Eight hours beyond there, across the date line, was Guam. As we circled in the predawn darkness, the waterfront was ablaze with light. Six thousand miles closer to the war than San Francisco, Guam had no dimout. Floodlights glared on the docks, shipyards, shops, and mills. If there was danger of attack, there was greater danger in jobs not done. It was work around the clock, work in the dark when the searing sun was gone, work in rain and mist, work in the muggy dawn.

As we touched down, the first faint wisps of gray streaked the sky. Even at that hour, Island Command was busy. An hour's run in a jeep brought me to what my driver assured me was the cool side of the island. At 0800, I reported in to Headquarters, Third Marine Division.

The Third Division had played a major part in the Guam campaign. It was a division of combat veterans, men who, before Guam, had fought the slow, rough battle of Bougainville. They had been overseas for two years and were disgusted with the war, the heat, everything. Maj. Gen. Graves B. Erskine had assumed command just before my arrival and was shaking the outfit from top to bottom. Some overripe fruit had fallen. Lt. Col. Howard Turton, the new G-2 (intelligence officer), was enthusiastic about the future but worried about time.

"Karl," he said, "there just isn't any time, a matter of weeks, and the whole division must be rebuilt. The Photo Section is worse than most. They've had no officer for months. Most of the men are overdue to go home. It's a damned mess. I don't know anything about photography, so it's up to you. Get cracking. I'm behind you if you need anything."

Again I had a blank check. As I turned to leave, the colonel





Maj. Gen. Graves B. Erskine, commander of the Third Marine Division at Iwo Jima. USMC photo by T.Sgt. James A. Mundell.

called me back. "Look out for the general," he said. "He's a bear, and he's in a hurry."

I walked down the row of staff area tents in the direction that the colonel had pointed. At the end I found the Photo Section, housed in a gloomy wall tent. Two men sprawled over some boxes. "Is this the Photo Section?" I asked, knowing full well it was.

One of the men half stood up. He was thin, with gray hair, a rumpled shirt, and a disinterested, vacant look. "Yes," he replied, "sir," as he saw my bars.

"Captain Soule," came a shout from the rear. "Are we glad to see you!" It was VanDerveer, taller and huskier, but with the same boyish face. He jumped over a row of boxes, and we shook hands. The man I had just spoken to snapped erect.

"This is Anderson, Captain, section chief," said VanDerveer. "We've been looking for you for weeks. The scuttlebutt was you were coming last month."

We had just sat down when the phone rang. I picked it up. "Photo Section, Captain Soule."

"Captain," said a warm, clear voice with a touch of southern accent, "this is General Erskine. Would you come up to my office, please?" Here, indeed, was a man in a hurry. I had been in the area less than an hour. He knew it and wanted to see me. Two minutes later, I was in his office.

General Erskine, handsome, with clear gray-blue eyes, had command presence even sitting down. He motioned me to a chair. "Captain," he said, "Welcome aboard. You've met Colonel Turton, I understand."

"Yes, sir, I have."

"Now, Captain, what are your plans for the Photographic Section?"

Fortunately, I was sitting down, and more fortunately still, I had a detailed, specific answer. All those months in Quantico, all those hours in that hard bucket seat flying the Pacific, I had thought and planned. Now I laid it out: 1, 2, 3, a, b, c. When I finished, the general smiled. "Good, Captain, go to it. Colonel Turton will give you all the help you need. If he doesn't, come to me."

When I mentioned that interview to Maj. Robert Mansfield, di-

vision adjutant, he grinned. "I heard about it," he said. "If you hadn't had the answers, you'd have been the mess officer so fast it's made your head swim!"

The problem at the Photo Section had not been understated. Of fourteen men, nine were overdue to return home. They were fed up, felt sorry for themselves, and were just plain ugly. Equipment and supplies had piled up unopened. The rear of the tent was filled with boxes and crates. Everything was on dead center. I had only four weeks.

Anderson, section chief, due to leave any day, had lost all interest. We strolled along the cliff under the palm trees. I made it plain to him that he would not be released until there was some discipline among the men and there was someone to take his place. When we returned, he was ready to work. We went directly to the mountain of gear.

"What's in all these boxes?" I asked.

He looked sheepishly at the floor. "We don't know, Captain," he muttered. "They've never been opened."

"There's your first project. Take two men and open all of them. I want a complete list. Make sure everything works."

Two days later our inventory was complete. Seven large boxes contained color movie film outdated by more than a year. Every magazine we tested jammed after only a few feet. When I reported it to Lt. Col. James D. Hittle, G-4 (quartermaster), he was sympathetic. "Well, what do you want to do with it?"

"Nothing we can do with it, except burn it."

"All right, burn it. We'll requisition more. If that's no good, we'll burn that too. Sooner or later we'll get to the fresh stuff."

So it went, three shipments altogether, fifteen thousand dollars' worth of film, shipped halfway around the world, then left to mold in a humid warehouse for over a year before it came to us. Finally we got a box that smelled different when we opened it; the film was fresh.

New equipment and supplies solved part of our problem, but my big job was personnel. New men were on the way but might not arrive in time. My task was to be ready *today* and to improve our capabilities almost hourly. In addition to the job at headquarters, I

had to assign and train my regimental teams. Raddatz was responsible for much of that.

Work began early. At 0500, the band marched through the area. No sleep after that! By midafternoon, we knocked off for the day, at least that's what the orders said. Most of us were busy well into the evening. We had little time for exercise or recreation. My search for a workout partner got nowhere. No officer would have anything to do with it. "Too hot" was the usual reply. Lt. Tom Philpott, my tent mate, even objected to my doing a hundred push-ups each morning: "Knock it off, Karl. Just watching you ruins my whole day."

After two weeks, I found a wrestling partner, Corporal Jurasin. Officers and enlisted men aren't supposed to do that sort of thing together. We didn't tell anybody; we just did it. Jurasin, a big, tough Swede from Wisconsin, had wrestled in school and knew what he was doing. He threw me all over the deck (no mat) and won nearly every time. Once I thought that he was taking out on me his frustration with his desk job and with officers in general. Another time, we were especially sweaty and covered with red dust. That was the day the shower didn't work. We washed in an icy stream just down the road. After that, we checked the shower before we worked out.

It wasn't all work. Our camp, atop a bluff, commanded one of the finest views in the Pacific. A breeze blew constantly, rustling the palms, keeping us cool. My living tent was a fine pyramidal with a plywood deck and screen walls. My bedsprings were strips of inner tubes, comfortable, but hazardous when I got in and out. If I didn't do it just right, they snapped. Once I fell through to the deck. From bed, I looked out on miles of palm-lined coast. At night, when the wind was still, I could hear the surf.

We had a fine shower. Water, heated by the sun, was almost too hot, but it was limited in amount by the fifty-gallon drum in which it was stored. We ate in a screened building just down the road. The Officers' Club, a dream of cool breezes and a wide verandah, commanded that same superb vista of the shore. We had movies every evening, but I worked at the office. The breeze was so constant and the area so well sprayed that I could sit for hours under an open bulb without seeing a single insect.

It was dry on our bluff, but every day brought at least one hard,



The Third Marine Division's officers' club on Guam, shown here in April 1945, was perhaps the finest in the Western Pacific. USMC photo by Thayer Soule.

brief shower. It burst suddenly over the camp, slashing through the trees, scattering fronds, coconuts, and breadfruit. It blew horizontally through the screen walls of our tent, sometimes all the way across the deck. Then the sun came out. The ground was coral. Water ran off instantly, no mud or ooze. The trees turned a vibrant, sparkling green. In late afternoon we sat on the porch at the club, our feet up on the rail, looking out on our view. At night, when I first slid into bed, even a sheet was too much to have over me; but long before morning I pulled it up, and later, more often than not, a blanket as well. Ours was the most delightful, most beautiful camp in the western Pacific.

For some men, beauty was not enough. For them, the Pacific was a dreary place where they were wasting their lives. For them, there was no glittering sea, no rustle of palms, no green mountains. They didn't feel the warm embrace of the air. They didn't see the moonlight, the red sunsets, or the starry nights. They knew only heat,

black nights, mud, and rain. For anyone who would look, there was beauty in all those islands. How quiet they were, how much the way they ought to be! My mind went back to Guadalcanal. It had been beautiful there too, even on that morning after a whole night of fierce bombardment. Terror had gripped us in the dank darkness for what seemed to us a lifetime. Then the shelling stopped. As we came out of our dugout, the eastern sky was a blaze of yellow, gold, and red. Here on Guam, I lay in my bunk looking out on my view. Even today, half a century later, I can close my eyes and see it still. I hear the surf once more.

By mid-December we were more or less ready. The men who most deserved rotation back to the States had gone. The general had approved my Standing Operating Procedure for Photography. We got a big new tent with twice as much space, but we wanted a plywood deck. The acquisition of that deck was our section's crowning achievement. Plywood was harder to get than Scotch whiskey. We owed our success to Impenachio.

Corporal Ralph Impenachio was a photographer and camera repairman, but his greatest talent lay in procurement, most of it by "moonlight requisition." Appropriation of government property was acceptable as long as it was for official use, not for personal gain. Impenachio observed the guidelines scrupulously. He never stole anything. He merely arranged for an informal transfer with the full knowledge of all concerned. He knew every supply sergeant and CPO (chief petty officer) on the island and had befriended all of them. We needed a jeep? Impy produced one in twenty-four hours. It was badly battered, and a history of its recent past would be impossible to obtain, but there it was, all ours. "Don't ask questions, Captain," Impy said, "Just drive it."

Impy produced an endless array of gear, but what we really wanted was that plywood tent deck. When I mentioned it, he was scornful. "What do you mean, a deck?" he snorted. "I'll get us a Quonset hut."

He did, too! Three days later he drew me to one side. "Captain," he whispered, "it's all set. The Seabees have a Quonset hut for us. All we gotta do is go and get it. They'll even put it up for us."

A new Quonset hut in the staff area, especially for the lowly Photo Section, was not in order. Someone would ask questions. I had to take it up with the colonel. Impy was reluctant but finally agreed. Colonel Turton was shocked at first, then understanding, then amused, and finally agreeable. He would request the trucks. We were all set until that evening. After chow, he called me into his office.

"Karl," he said, "about that Quonset hut. I'm afraid we'd better call it off. After all, it *is* out of line, and we'll be leaving pretty soon anyway. You know how it is, the general . . ."

"Yes, I know how it is," said Impy, when I told him. "The colonel gets cold feet. Well, we can haul plywood in our jeep." We did, that very night.

"Plywood deck," said the colonel the next morning as he entered. "Very nice, very nice indeed. Next thing I know, you fellows will be getting a Quonset hut!"

The adjutant ducked his head into the tent. "Your man Franklin is here, Karl," he said.

At last! No man could help me more, and here he was: big, jolly, competent Franklin, a smile on his face, a laugh on his lips, and a hearty handshake for me: "Thought if I waited long enough, you'd have the whole thing over with, Captain." As my senior NCO, Franklin was my best bridge to the men. He was one of them, yet he knew me well. He knew what I was trying to do and had seen it work in combat on Peleliu. Best of all, he had that sharp mind and deep insight into people. From that moment, things ran more smoothly.

Our equipment and supply problems were solved, and, with Franklin, we were up to strength, twenty men and me: sixteen still photographers and four movie men. I kept four men with me at headquarters. The others went to the regiments. For motion pictures, we used Eastman Ciné Kodak Specials, and Bell and Howell magazine cameras, all with 16mm Kodachrome color film. The men "slated" each roll, just as Hollywood did, photographing index cards that gave the photographer's name, the unit, the place, and time. Our still cameras were bulky Speed Graphics. They were not easy to use, but they produced large, sharp negatives. For identification, we inserted a strip on one side of the opening for the film pack. This imprinted "Official

Photograph - 3D Mar. Div.” on the margin of each negative. At first, we also included the photographer’s name, but cameras were sometimes used by several men, so we gave that up. This identification made things much easier at the Corps photo center, where combat films were developed, and gave the division instant, automatic credit.

For the next few weeks we concentrated on photographic coverage of company and battalion combat exercises, regimental and division maneuvers, and map and communication problems. One night we slept high on the slopes of Mount Topacho. Under the ironwood trees, the air was clear and cold. A week later we were in a blazing volcanic valley, a ringer for our destination, Iwo Jima.

Yes, the secret was out, at least at headquarters. We made maps and models of the island, profiles, and aerial mosaics. Nothing we saw or heard was good, except that this time, after two operations in assault, the division would be in reserve and possibly not land at all. That last part was always good for a laugh. Whom were they kidding? Twenty-eight thousand Japanese were dug in on a tiny rock island fortified from one end to the other, with only two possible beaches and no opportunity for surprise. We’d be needed, and soon!

Our most important motion picture project was a film report on pallet loading. This new concept was destined to revolutionize loading all over the world, but it started with the Iwo Jima operation. Franklin did a lot of work on that. I spent time on it, too, and also on our regimental teams. In our jeep, I visited them frequently. Once I went the long way, around the island. Guam, only a dot on the map, had many miles of roads. It was a rugged island, with coral ridges, deep gullies, and an eight-thousand-foot mountain. The larger towns had been destroyed in the fighting, but along the west coast were miles of sugar fields and a few small villages. In the American cemetery, near the landing beaches, crosses stretched for hundreds of yards—no ranks, no service designations, only names. I had known two of those who were buried there. Corporals Claude Winkler and Howard Foss had worked with me in Quantico. After three weeks of battle—one bullet, one damned bit of metal—a split second, and it was all over for them. I stood among the crosses and wondered as I had so many times before—and after—why them and not me? Was it worth it? Could it ever be worth it? It was the sort of thing I didn’t



discuss with anyone except the chaplain, maybe, and he didn't know the answer either. Under the palms, by the crosses, I thought about it, cursed, and wept a little.

The feverish pace of preparation slackened as Christmas approached. The chapel was full on weekdays as well as Sundays. Our new chaplain, a young Episcopalian, had a burning sincerity that got through to everyone. Many of us were out of the habit of going to church, but something about that chaplain and his church drew us. The islanders had built the building of coconut logs and fronds. It was a mission church and looked like one. On Christmas eve, a candlelight procession wound down the palm-lined street. Hundreds of candles flickered in the breeze and cast wild shadows on the walls and ceiling as we entered the building. Two hundred hearty voices boomed out "Oh, Come All Ye Faithful." It surged out into the tropic night, then faded almost to a whisper with "Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem." Christmas! I can hear it still.

We gave a Christmas party for the children of the native village down the road. Most of the eighty kids were so young that they had never known a peacetime Christmas. We had a tree with ornaments, lights, and candy. We hauled in a truckload of presents, toys and gadgets conjured from God knows where. Santa Claus was complete with whiskers, a red suit, a fat tummy, and a first sergeant's walk. As he stepped from his jeep, the children shrieked with joy. Santa was jammed into a corner, unable to move. His jolly "Ho, ho, ho" changed to a roaring, imperious command: "Gangway, goddammit, it's Santa Claus!"

The Christmas present for the Photo Section was a new generator. For a long time we had the only one in headquarters. Other sections hooked onto it, of course, until finally it became not ours but the headquarters machine. Every office had at least one bulb. With the generator overloaded, each addition meant less light for all. Our arc light took more power than all the other lamps combined. When we switched it on, the rest of headquarters was plunged into darkness. Shouts rose from every tent, pained howls of "Oh no, not again!" Even on ordinary evenings, the general, at the far end of the line, had little more than a pale glow in his bulb.

Inconveniencing so many highly placed people should have produced a solution almost overnight. The simplest, of course, would be expropriation of our machine. But things didn't work that way. They just went on and on until, at Christmas, headquarters got a generator of its own. We received a brand new one to replace Old Faithful, now worn and badly bruised.

We spent New Year's Eve around a piano with Col. John B. Wilson, assistant division commander. Our songs were not rowdy or loud but happy songs we knew and loved. It was a pleasant end to 1944. How much more enjoyable it would have been if we had known that the year just starting would see the end of the war. We did know that it would see our landing on Iwo Jima. The less we thought about that, the better.

The naval gunfire officer called from across the street: "Karl, we're going up to Rota on a fire mission. How about some pictures?"

Rota was a tiny island of the Mariana chain only a few miles away. Bypassed in the landings, it was still occupied by the Japanese. We used it as a target in training exercises. At dawn the next morning we boarded a large destroyer and headed north. The sea was calm but with a heavy ground swell. The ship, top-heavy with newly added radar gear, rolled wildly. In the wardroom, we Marines joined the ship's officers for breakfast. Because of the rolling, ports and hatches were secured. The air was foul, tinged with the odor of bacon grease and burnt toast. Service was slow. We sat at the table, staring straight ahead, everyone becoming greener by the minute.

Mess men brought scrambled eggs and coffee. The fans whirled, changing pitch as the ship rolled. No one spoke. The food sat limp and slithery on our plates. Someone had to surrender, but it was a matter of pride. The ship's officers couldn't show weakness in front of the Marines, and we wouldn't be outdone by the Navy. The honor of the Corps was at stake. I looked around the table. An ensign was nibbling some toast. A Marine lieutenant was sipping coffee. All the others just sat, and the fans whirled. Finally the ship's Exec, a full commander, stood up. "Gentlemen," he said weakly, "I don't know about you, but I'm seasick."

We all dashed for the open deck. The commander had done his

duty. At great risk to his personal pride and prestige, he had saved those under his command from a terrible fate.

An hour later, we were off the coast of Rota. My men were in position. The ship's range finder ceased its slow turning and locked onto a rocky point. The guns swung into position. "I don't see anything but rock and trees," said Colonel Heinl, peering through his glasses. "Are you sure this is the place?"

"Oh, the Japs are there all right," the captain replied. "We knocked out their little coast gun last trip, but they're still there. You can bet on it."

The squawk box spoke mechanically, "Ready to commence firing."

"Very well," said the captain. "Commence firing."

The guns pointed ominously. In a moment, I would have my first close-up experience with naval gunfire. I braced myself. I had cotton in my ears. The captain gripped the rail and opened his mouth.

I don't know what struck me hardest, the burst of yellow flame, the slam of noise and air, or the cloud of smoke and cinders. They all came at once, a stunning, blinding, deafening explosion of light and sound. The deck heaved. The ship recoiled in a short roll. On the island, black puffs of smoke blossomed in the rocks. Four guns had fired at once. The noise could hardly have been worse if we had taken a direct hit, and I said so.

"Right," said the captain. "A hit isn't any worse for noise. They tell me that when a cruiser is in battle, the men below decks don't know whether the main battery is firing or they're getting clobbered."

We caught our breath, but another blast punched out our wind. It was a solid, sharp bang, mean and ugly, with no wasted energy. Black specks of powder filled the air.

"We should be inside, of course," said the captain, "but it's something to see."

"And feel," I said. "It sure is different from artillery."

"You can say that again," said the captain. "Got it!" he cried, as two black bursts landed squarely on a small tower atop the rock. "That's enough. Cease firing."

The ship swung around, and we headed back toward Guam. Looking at the rocky point, I felt guilty. We had come on a training

mission. There were real enemy to shoot at, but for us it was a sort of picnic, too. We didn't see any Japanese, but they were there, crouched in any shelter they could find, unable to reply, cursing us, praying to survive, even dying, perhaps. For what? So we could practice gunfire. It was war, but it wasn't fair. We didn't want their little island. They couldn't do us any harm. It was just because they were handy. Iwo would be different. We needed that island. But we didn't need Rota. I watched quietly as it dropped astern.

By 8 January my unit was ready to move. We were taking an absolute minimum of gear. All film would be returned to Guam for processing. Of the 117 boxes that had jammed our tent on my arrival, only nine remained. The rest had been distributed to the regimental teams. Raddatz reported that all was well there.

Colonel Turton called me to his office. "Karl," he said, "do you know anything about this?" He handed me a letter from the corps commander. It was contemplated, it said, that division photographic officers would be ordered back to the States as soon as possible after the operation. Officers of the assault divisions would go after the initial stages. I would follow toward the end. It meant a trip home and easy duty in Hollywood, but it didn't seem right. I had just returned to the Pacific after a year in Quantico. My unit was rebuilt and raring to go. When the operation was over, I would have to rebuild it again. Besides, the other photo officers could do what had to be done. I read the letter again and handed it back.

"Nice duty, Colonel," I said, "but it doesn't make much sense. My job is right here."

The colonel was startled. "You mean you don't want to go?"

"Yeah, crazy, isn't it? I don't think it's necessary."

"Well," he sighed, "we'll see what happens. You may not have much to say about it, you know. Thanks anyway. I just wanted to see how you felt about it." He dropped the letter into a drawer. "I understand you'll be leaving after this show anyway, Karl, for Fleet Marine Force, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir. That's another reason. There isn't time for a trip to the States. If we get shot up on Iwo, it'll be all I can do to get the outfit back in shape for the next operation."

“OK,” said the colonel, “forget it.” He closed the drawer, and I forgot about it. After all, it was only “contemplated.” I hadn’t learned yet that when three stars contemplate something, it’s as good as done.

By 1 February, after several delays, our departure was imminent. We had parties and leave-taking, permanent leave-taking, the kind that comes only in war. There was a tinny, brassy quality to it, words that didn’t ring true like “when you get back” and “next time.” Once in a while someone said “*if* I get back,” but usually it was just “sure” or “yeah” and a slap on the back. It was mechanical and empty, words to fill a silence, nothing more. We had said our good-byes months or years before in a place called the States. There was snow there now, fireplaces, and frosted windows. Here on Guam, February was like July. We said our good-byes, drank our beer, cleaned out a huge buffet, and sat in the palm grove until midnight.

There was a record crowd at church that last Sunday. No one had urged or pushed, least of all the chaplain. We went because we wanted to, because we had to. We liked the chaplain and his nonsense way, but Cpl. John Batts was puzzled. “Captain,” he asked, “what’s the difference between an Episcopalian and a Methodist? This chaplain wears a collar like a padre, but he isn’t Catholic. I used to go to a Methodist church when I was a kid. This guy seems about the same as the minister we had then. I can’t see much difference.”

“Well, there isn’t much, really,” I said, “when you come right down to it.”

“I kind of like going to church here,” he continued. “A lot of fellows do.” He looked up the street for a full minute. “You need something like this to get you going to church again, I guess. You never know what’s going to happen, do you, Captain?”

## 12

### *Iwo Jima*

The departure of the Third Division for Iwo Jima was like the start of a big training exercise. We were in reserve, a well-earned change from the last two operations. "We may not even get ashore," Dave Jones said hopefully. "With the Fourth and Fifth on that tiny damn island, there won't even be room for us."

We rolled up our blankets, closed our footlockers, and walked out of our tents. We would be back, simple as that. But it wasn't that simple. We were on a deadly journey into hell. For the replacements it was a thrill, the big show. For the old hands it was hell. We knew enough to be scared. The novelty went out of it in Guam or Bougainville or Guadalcanal, a month, a year, or two years ago. We got through that. Our nerves were calmed down. We could eat again, sleep again, look forward again. Now that heavy black cloud was rolling in once more. This time it was Iwo Jima.

The island seemed more ominous, more deadly with each report. There were more troops than we had thought, more installations, little damage from our bombing. Most of our veterans were gone. In their place, we had skinny kids who had no business being here at all. Huskier guys straight from boot camp had hardly heard a gun fired. They were the ones who were raring to go. That would change. A few minutes on that beach, and they would know what we knew. We couldn't prepare them. They had to learn for themselves.

On 14 February we boarded *Doyen*, APA-1, small, neat, well run. Our convoy of seven ships bore the Twenty-first Marines, reinforced, and the assistant division staff. My duties while on board were in intelligence, not photography. We steamed north for four days over a smooth, blue sea. Twice we had antiaircraft practice and,



This map of Iwo Jima, based on aerial photos, was made in January 1945.  
Produced by Intelligence Section, Third Marine Division.

on Sunday, a crowded church service. Reports from Iwo were bad. Our bombardment was continuing from air and sea, but the Japanese guns were still firing. Colonel Wilson crouched over his radio as reports crackled in. "No," he said, his teeth clamped on a half-smoked cigar, "it's not going to work. We're going to have to go in and dig them out. I can see it coming. This is going to be the worst yet."

Nineteen February was D-Day—clear sky, calm sea. History's heaviest bombardment pounded the island and shook the heavens. We could see the entire spectacle: battleships shelling the shore, planes swooping low, the white wakes of hundreds of landing boats, and, on the horizon, that ugly, squat island, half hidden in smoke. All that day landing boats ran their frenzied shuttles. All that day the bombardment continued. All that day the island lurked there. There was something about that mountain, Suribachi, that was almost leprous. It was naked, rocky, pitted, spotted with orange flames as shells and bombs burst upon it.

From the safety of our well-scrubbed ship, we watched and listened. The radio was full of terse talk pouring into the air for the whole armada to hear: "For God's sake, somebody, anybody, put some fire on hill 602. We can't move. They're looking down our throats."

The command net crackled messages: "request fire mission," "increasing resistance," "heavy casualties." The colonel stared at his battle maps, drawing lines with a big red pencil, muttering all the time. Marines were on the beach, but pinned down and being blasted to pieces. They couldn't go forward. They wouldn't go back. Now and then the colonel extended his lines here or there, but it was still only a toehold.

At sunset the firing diminished, and our ship withdrew. The island was below the horizon, but thunder still rumbled across the water. The war, a world of death, blood, and explosions, was strangely far away.

The colonel leaned on the rail and stared into the darkness. "Only a matter of time before we go in," he said. "They can't do it without us. Here I sit in this goddamn ship, drawing lines on a goddamn map, no help to anybody. Christ," he shouted, "what a goddamn way to fight a war!"

He slammed his palm on the railing, spat out his cigar, and went





A Marine assault wave hits the beach at Iwo Jima on D-Day, 19 February 1945. USMC photo.

inside. From the west, the thunder rolled on. We retired to our warm bunks, safe for the moment. No enemy could knife us in our slumber.

Next morning Iwo became personal as wounded came aboard. We didn't know these men, but they were Marines, or had been. They were limp, torn, slashed, and crippled. The stream of litters was endless. A few men could laugh and joke, but usually a boat came alongside and the transfer was made without a word. This was what the thunder was about. We were taking a beating.

Colonel Wilson read the dispatch board, scribbled his signature, and looked up. "Well," he said, "the waiting's over. The Twenty-first is going in."

Only one regiment, but that was the start. Already the two transports nearest us were heading toward the island. We stood at the rail and waved as they passed. With one of my teams going in, I asked to go too. Colonel Wilson just looked at me.

“What for? What can you do?”

“Well, sir, those are my boys. I have to get in there.”

“Captain, you don’t have to do anything. You trained them, didn’t you? They know what they’re doing, don’t they?”

“Yes, sir.”

“OK. Relax. I have a whole damn regiment in there. I’m sitting, ain’t I? When the time comes, we’ll all go, I promise you.”

He lit another cigar, blew a cloud of smoke at the light, and put his arm around my shoulder. “Take it easy, Karl. Our time will come soon enough.”

On D+3, we took Mount Suribachi. With our glasses, we could just make out our flag atop the mountain. This was a turning point. No longer could the enemy look down on us and direct their fire. That flag raising was immortalized by Joe Rosenthal, the improbable civilian photographer who, in the midst of the hottest combat of the Pacific, went all the way with the Marines and made the greatest picture of the war. A motion picture was made at the same moment by a Marine, Sgt. William H. Genaust. Rosenthal got the glory. Bill’s film got through, but the personal credit was delayed by channels. Bill covered a few more days of the campaign before his luck ran out.

On D+4, a few of division staff went ashore. With two photo teams now on the beach, I felt I had a good case to go myself and asked the colonel again. He listened quietly, looking straight into my eyes with a warm yet hard look. When I finished he stood up, quite rigidly, I thought.

“Karl,” he said, “what rank are you?”

“Captain, sir.”

“How many photographic officers does this division have?”

“One, sir.”

“How many teams?”

“Nine, sir.”

“How many are on the beach?”

“Two, sir.”

“Very well.”



Artillery pounds Mount Suribachi on 21 February 1945. USMC photo.



(Above) Marines advance on the double near Airfield Number 1 on 21 February 1945. USMC photo. (Below) Another Japanese position is destroyed on Iwo Jima on 21 February 1945. USMC photo.



I could see it coming. "Captain," he said, "you are to stay aboard this ship until I order otherwise. Is that clear?"

"Aye, aye, sir," I said stiffly.

Then the sternness was gone. With a flicker of a wink in his eye, he slapped my arm. "Keep me company, goddammit," he said.

On D+5, a couple of us finally got permission to go ashore, but it was afternoon before we left the ship. The ride was short but seemed a lifetime. Ahead loomed that island of rock and sand, sulphur fumes and death. Shaped like a pork chop, it was less than six miles long from north to south, with Mount Suribachi at the southern tip. It was bleak, gaunt, devoid of life, except what had come from outside. Now death had come, death from the sea and sky, death by fire and shell, bayonet and knife.

As we approached, a black, greasy pall of smoke hung over the beach, where even now shells burst occasionally. Far off was the clatter of small arms and the crump of mortars, a continuous volley that echoed from the cliffs and rolled out over the water. We were in a line of boats moving toward the beach. At five hundred yards we could pick out men, trucks, tanks, and jeeps. The sand really was black. We knew it was, but it was hard to visualize, a whole island of black volcanic sand, six feet deep at the water's edge. Chaos was all around us. Crippled landing craft were beached at wild angles, swamped by the sea, pounded by the surf. Trucks and tanks were upended and awash. Crates, boxes, cases, and cartons were crushed and shattered, soggy with the sea.

Our boat crunched on the sand, the ramp dropped, and we walked ashore. The assault troops had done their job. Because of them, I just walked ashore. It was unfair. Who was I to walk ashore so easily? Why wasn't I in that line of wounded men, or already blown to bits? There it was again: Why? As far as that went, why was I here and not in Quantico? The minute I started to ask why, I was in trouble.

Iwo's sand was gritty, thick, and loose. It clutched at my feet. On my left a jeep was overturned, its windshield smashed, its hood under water, one wheel in the air. Hundreds of men were moving boxes—ammunition and rations—hand to hand from the surf to higher ground. Far off to the right, a row of ambulances moved slowly toward the water. Beside them was a line of shattered men. They were

the walking wounded, the fortunate few, hurt but still alive, injured but able to walk, outward bound to the ships, perhaps home. Another group was closer, stretcher cases with white blankets and bloody clothes. One man, who couldn't have been over eighteen, flashed a wide grin, his teeth white against his greasy face. Another was on his stomach, his head buried in his hands, his hair dark with blood. A low, half-crazy laugh came in short coughs, muffled by his jacket.

We started up the hill. The CP was up ahead somewhere, at the far end of Airfield Number 1. We knew that field well from maps and models. It was in the form of a giant A, the only level ground in that part of the island. We had memorized its location, its runways, and the cover along the north side. How could it look so different from what we expected?

Telephone wires, strung in loose garlands from tall poles, converged on a hill. Switchboard. We stopped for directions. "Third Division? No line in yet. Didn't know they were here. You with the Third? Hey, Joe, where's the Third's CP at?" Joe said something about on up the road and across the airfield. We went on.

Now we were on higher ground, with the airfield on our left. The sun was low but hot. Walking was tough. We stopped to rest. Leaning against a crate of shells, we watched the traffic roll by, heavy stuff, tanks and trucks, all loaded with ammo and chow. Nothing else was ashore. Nothing else would be ashore for days.

Suddenly the air was torn by a swish and a crash, one part of the other. A ball of flame leaped from one of the trucks. Men ran in all directions. We slithered under a truck. Another swish and crash. Down the road, two men were blown into the air in pieces. A head rolled twenty yards. Another crash. Black smoke curled from a truck, then fire, and the popping of ammunition. Another crash. Sand rose in a cloud behind us. Another! Heavy fragments whistled over our heads. A corpsman ran to a wounded Marine. Another shell, and both men were gone. It was so quick, so complete, so impersonal—no warning, no shriek, just that crash and ball of smoke. But men had died. The trucks started up again. Two more corpsmen ran along the road to help where they could.

We were well off the beach now. On the left was Suribachi, dark, tall, and ugly. On our right, the land rose in a series of low

cliffs. It was from there, beyond the cliffs, that the shells had come. One street, if it could be called that, had more traffic than the others, so we followed it, keeping well to the side as trucks roared by. We were on the airfield, a pitted, pocked, stony field, already being repaired. At the base of the first low cliff, halfway across the island, we found the CP. It wasn't much: two tents, three jeeps, and a pole festooned with wires. Colonel Turton was sitting on a box of rations.

"Well," he smiled, "we beat you in, by five minutes." He took off his helmet and ran his hand over his forehead. "Pick a spot around here somewhere and dig a hole. We may get hit any minute."

The only good thing about Iwo was that, in many places, it was easy to dig. I had a hole in short order. The sandy sides constantly broke off and slid to the bottom, but it was deep enough so that I was below ground level, and close enough to the base of the cliff to be in defilade. Night was coming. Several of us sat on the edges of our holes and ate C rations while the colonel brought us up to date:

Casualties had been very heavy. However, The Fourth and Fifth Divisions had secured the southern part of the island, up to about five hundred yards north of where we were. There they had encountered fierce resistance from well-placed, well-manned positions. Their advance was stalled. The Third Division, only partially committed, occupied the center of the line, a sector only a thousand yards wide. We expected a strong counterattack. The entire area would be illuminated all night by flares and star shells. No one was to move about unless it was absolutely necessary. The colonel asked for questions, then turned to his own hole. "Well," he said, "that's all. Try to get some sleep while you can."

I dozed off somehow, lying in the bottom of my hole, my poncho over the top of it. Now and then a truck went by, or a tank, but for long periods it was quiet. Even through the poncho I could see the flicker of flares. Star shells burst just north of us. Aside from that, there was only the far off rumble of the surf, coming through the earth rather than through the air. The barking of our artillery, firing only yards away, was a steady, almost soothing noise. I dozed again.

It must have been after midnight when I awoke. Flares flickered in the sky. Our artillery was still firing, but now there was a new sound: the swish and hiss of incoming enemy shells. They crashed

behind us, puffs of orange in the black. I was glad that the ridge was there. It offered some protection. Again the swish. This time the shells hit closer to our guns. They roared back, a cannonade that pounded the air and sent sand running into my hole. An enemy salvo dropped closer. I slid down into my hole, way down, as far as I could go. A shell exploded on the ridge. A rattle of stones pelted the ground. For an hour, the explosions walked back and forth along the ridge and over the field, but the defilade protected me. I chuckled, then laughed, then roared with a crazy happiness. I was safe in my hole! Then, with the cannonade rocking the ground, I dozed again.

It was warm on Iwo for February. A jacket felt good at night, but even with the low gray clouds, the days were mild. Gradually some order came to the beaches. Heavy artillery landed. Our front inched forward, but each step was deadly. For every cave we knocked out, we found another. We didn't retreat, but advance was out of the question. We were in a continuous firefight without resolution. One day, Handley ran a hundred yards with bullets kicking up dirt around his feet. He breathed a short prayer as he ran, "Please, God, not today." VanDerveer had a wild morning filming tanks and flamethrowers. Until now, he had been without fear. For a man in his second operation, he was remarkable. Usually by then an element of caution appeared. When he came in after that morning, he had changed. "Man," he said, "the Purple Hearts were sure falling around me today."

He managed a grin, but there was no smile, no laugh such as he had so often. "Captain, how about covering the beach or something for a couple of days? I've had it up there for now."

I had been saving rear area work for a time like this. "OK," I said, "we need a lot of stuff down there."

While the stalemate continued, we covered the beach, the evacuation of wounded, and the handling of supplies. Much of our movie work was for our film on pallet loading: how it worked on shore, how the pallets stood up under combat conditions, how we could improve them, and make better use of them. Raddatz was in charge of that, as always doing a splendid job.

Communication with the beach and ships improved every day. Our still films went out regularly, always in small batches, for pro-





A Marine flamethrower hits a Japanese bunker on 28 February 1945. USMC photo.

cessing in Guam. We had some remarkable action shots, but most stills were for intelligence purposes. At Guadalcanal, all of our close-combat movie footage had been lost in transit to the States. Here on Iwo I kept it deep in our most secure dugout, determined that this time it would get through safely, when the time was right.

Water was scarce on Iwo. We had to bring in our drinking water. Each man had one canteen a day for all his needs. At headquarters, that included a shave, per orders of the general. We tried to get some sort of bath at least once a week, as Major Evans said, "whether we needed it or not." In one of the forward areas, there were hot springs, but the water was hard and had a strong smell of sulphur. Most of the men found this only a minor problem. They lolled in it whenever they had a chance.

After several days, with coverage of rear-area activities well in hand, I shifted some of the men back to forward units. A push was in

the works. There should be movement at last. Raddatz and Franklin went up with the Twenty-first. It was their last day of battle.

That afternoon somebody said something about a photographer being hit, but he wasn't sure. I pressed for details, but he had none. It was 1600 and starting to get dark. Three men, Franklin, Galloway, and Raddatz, were unaccounted for. This was not unusual. If action continued and they were not out of film, they might stay out a couple of days. At 1630 Galloway came in.

Galloway was an old-timer, not in age, but he'd been in the Corps for a long time. I didn't realize at first that he was wounded. "Captain," he said hoarsely, "we got hit."

He pointed to his leg. His pant leg was cut. I leaned over to look, but he stopped me. "Captain," he groaned, "they got Raddatz."

Oh God, no! Raddatz, who wouldn't stay home, who had to be with me!

"Is he . . . ?"

Galloway nodded and dropped his eyes. He was as tough as they come, but there was a sob in his voice. "Oh, Christ," he said, "right across the chest, six slugs at least, they just . . ." He stopped and looked up. "Captain," he said, "don't send anybody else up there. It isn't worth it. The stuff is so thick, we can't do anything. . . . Why did it have to be Don?"

There it was again: Why? He didn't expect an answer, but the question was there. He sank onto a bomb crate and pulled up his pant leg. The bandage was soaked in blood. "I was lucky," he said, poking it, "piece of mortar, I guess; but I don't think it's in there now. But Don. . . ." His voice broke.

"Get over to sick bay and have that looked at," I said, "and take care of yourself."

I had to get him out of there. I was faint. I could hear Raddatz, the blond kid who wouldn't stay home, saying over and over, "I want to be with you."

There it was: command again. This time it was a knife in my gut. I had let him come! I had done this to him! It was my fault! If it weren't for me, he'd be in Quantico right now. When it happened, I wasn't even there. The day that he needed me most, I was in this goddamn tent instead of up front. I cursed and kicked a gas can. I

pounded an ammo box until my fist bled, but it didn't help. Don was gone. It had happened to thousands of men on this goddamn island. It could happen to me. It didn't do any good to carry on. I blew my nose, wiped my eyes, and stood up.

Just in time. Handley and VanDerveer came in carrying their carbines, their canteens, and a small pack. "Captain," said Van, "we're going up to look for Raddatz—if it's OK," he added, sensing my reaction.

"What are you going to do if you find him?" I asked.

"Well," said Handley, "we thought we'd . . ."

"He'd do the same for us," Van cut in.

"Of course he would," I replied. "We all would. But there's nothing you can do for him now, nothing anybody can do."

"Well, at least we could . . ."

This was becoming an argument. "Fellows," I said, "I know how you feel, but it'll be dark before you get there. You can't do a thing to help. You're going to stay right here." I was tempted to say "and that's an order," a phrase I had never used, but they got the point.

"Yes, sir," they said, dejectedly.

Franklin had been more fortunate than Raddatz, but we didn't hear about him until the next day. He was seriously wounded, but made it back to our lines in a minor saga that he reported two weeks later in a remarkable letter from the hospital:

10 March [1945]

Dear Captain:

The trouble started when a mortar barrage held me up. When I arrived at the jumping-off line, the 21st was gone, and out of sight. I took off after them at a dead run, hitting holes for breath, and after a couple of hundred yards came up with the 24th. I was glad to see them, even shot a hundred feet [of film] on their advance. Then I set out again to find the 21st.

This time it was easy. I worked my way up to the point, and had some nice stuff of the boys coming toward the

camera before a Jap tank popped out of nowhere. The nearest rocks were twenty yards away, and I didn't stop until I got to them. The knoll I'd just left turned out to be fortification for another tank, dug in. The Jap in it lifted the hatch cover, tapped a grenade, and dropped it into a shell hole where a Marine had taken shelter, then, leisurely enough, pulled the cover back over his head. All this time two guys were firing at him with M-1's, and missing, at twenty yards!

I set the camera for the next time he'd stick his head out, and stood up to shoot. A sergeant behind me must have figured everything was clear. He crept out from cover and stuck his head alongside mine in time to take a bullet. It passed through his head, and laid both eyes out on his cheeks, but didn't kill him. All I could think of was that he had stopped my bullet. In sticking out my own neck, I had made him do the same. It's a rotten feeling. It was weeks before I could sleep through the night without being awakened by the memory of him rolling over on his back with those blobs of red jelly on his face, saying, "I can't see!"

Well, I figured my luck was about out. When I got to the CP, they told me the lines were cut, and the flank was under heavy and accurate sniper fire. I wouldn't be able to make it back. I was just about out of film, and had four hundred feet of good stuff to turn in. It seemed as good a time as any to make a try.

I steered clear of one flank, too clear, I guess. I came up behind a Jap pillbox with Marines trying to clear it out. I couldn't make a run for it because if the Japs didn't get me, some trigger-happy Marine would. I kept heading to the right, and pretty soon realized I was in Jap territory. I had a bad hour passing several dozen cave mouths, and then, about thirty yards away, I saw a Marine helmet walk by. I dropped my guard, so to speak, and walked into an ambush. There was a Marine lying on his face, with a new bandage on his head, and no weapons. A few feet away was a Jap rifle, polished. I thought of the wrong things first, that the rifle was a booby trap, or that the Marine

was. In the couple of seconds it took me to wake up to the ambush idea, I spotted the cave mouth off to the left, just as the bullet hit me.

Who the hell ever said a bullet doesn't hurt when it hits? This one came through my hip and out my belly. It felt as if someone had buried a red-hot ax in me. It may have been the impact that knocked me down, or maybe I fell because the nerves were severed. My left side was paralyzed. But I didn't stay there. I hit the only hole anywhere around before they could fire again.

The next few minutes were bad, but my head cleared, and I emptied my canteens. I'd lost my rifle, helmet, and pack, and figured the Japs would be up any second. I didn't want the bastards to have the water. I did some hazy thinking, and ended with my [film] magazines in my hand. If the Japs came at me, I meant to throw them like grenades, and make a try for my carbine. At the worst, they'd have to shoot. At best, I'd have a gun with twelve rounds in it. Don't ever go out without a pistol strapped on, and a couple of grenades. It's a hell of a feeling to be weaponless.

I managed to put sulfa in the two holes, but I couldn't dress them without showing above the ground, and laying down the magazines. The Japs didn't come for me. I think they were waiting for me to call a corpsman. When I didn't, they figured I was dead, which wasn't a bad way to figure since I had about the same idea. Pretty soon I could hear them talking. When the war is over we must abolish the language. It's an ugly one.

Three hours later it grew dark, i.e. full moon and flares. I started to crawl out, but I couldn't go toward the rifle. I had to follow a depression away from it. Half an hour later I was far enough away to try some bandaging. I ran into another problem here. I'd leaked a double handful of something out of the hole in my belly, and didn't know what to do with it. I figured it was lost anyway, and I couldn't see stuffing a mess of potential gangrene back into my belly. The Doc told me later it would have been useless to try,

and my decision was correct. I wrapped it on top of the hole, and put the compress on. Another point: Carry two compresses. There is often more than one wound, as you know.

I spent the next eleven or twelve hours pulling myself up to the mouths of Jap dugouts, and away again. They make much less noise than we do at night. They were doing lots of moving around, especially after one of the little beasts stumbled on me. He got very close to my face, peering, then exclaimed in Japanese, and tried to brain me with a rock. I reared up and went for his throat, and for no reason I can think of, growled. He took off like a streak. That's another point to remember: They don't like to be growled at.

Some time after that I'd made my way to a field. The Japs kept crossing it, wearing some sort of white vest to identify themselves to the others at night. We'd been laying a barrage at the far end, and I headed into it. It made excellent cover. I got as close as I dared, and the boys really laid them in. Time was certainly running out, though. Jap roosters began crowing, and with all good intentions, the U.S. Navy kept five flares at a time in the air. I had to get out of that field in a hurry, and back into the rocks.

When I reached them, it was daylight, and I couldn't find any cover. I found myself fifteen or twenty feet from the mouth of another damn cave, with Jap gear about, and the smoke of what I took to be a cigarette. I couldn't move more than a few inches at a time, and realized I'd have to make cover. I pulled apart some rocks in a pile, squeezed myself in, laid the rocks on me, and stayed there six hours. In the meanwhile, we'd begun to lay down a real barrage, everything from 155s to rockets and strafing planes. They took apart every stone in the area, with the exception of my little pile. It was impressive.

The barrage lifted after a time, and I made plans for the night. All I had to do was get through the Jap lines, and

then ours, without getting shot. I knew the 5th would not be able to get through the area I'd spent the night in.

I don't have to tell you my sentiments when I heard a Browning light [machine gun] very close. I lifted my head, and there were half a dozen Marines firing in three directions. They'd bypassed that Jap pocket. One of them looked my way, and I thought he was going to open fire in still a fourth direction, which would have been a miscarriage of justice, and a slap in the face to the fates assigned to my welfare. I tried to yell at him, but discovered to my astonishment that I was reduced to a squeak. Anyway, he didn't fire. I'm convinced that it was only because he'd never seen a bald Jap.

The rest was easy. I got out of my crypt, and lay against the rocks while a sniper spent four hours bouncing pellets from a rock near my head. Maybe he thought it was my head. Then some mortar guys reached me with a stretcher. They got me back through a hell of a lot of sniper fire, but by this time I was convinced I was immortal, and that my shield of invulnerability covered those with me.

That night they poured bottles of liquid into both my arms, rendered me porous and insensible with a vast number of injections, and wielded what must have been a saber on my belly wall. The Doc was astonished at my relatively good condition, in view of the circumstances, and the fact that my clothes were stiff to the knees from leakage.

The moral is: Don't waste your vital substance on athletics and calisthenics. Lead a corrupt existence, mix blasphemy with vulgar oaths, and the Lord will make you as immortal as he has Satan, lo, these many centuries!

See you,  
Franklin

By the first of March we had pushed the Japanese into the northern end of the island. Like a spring, they were harder to compress

with each yard we advanced, but we never relaxed the pressure. Our lines inched forward, a bit here, some there, but never a general advance or breakthrough.

Airfield Number 2 was now cleared, and the Engineers were making rapid progress in its repair. On 2 March the first plane landed, a B-29 crippled by antiaircraft fire over Japan. It came in low, without circling, and slid to a stop. Iwo had saved its first air crew, the first of hundreds in the months to come. We had paid a terrible price for that landing field, a cost no one had even imagined. Three divisions had been chewed up. Five thousand men had died. Almost fifteen thousand had been wounded. Iwo Jima would live with Guadalcanal, Belleau Wood, and all the others, going back two hundred years.

But this is getting ahead of the story. On 2 March, when that first plane landed, a lot of bloody fighting still lay ahead. Planes provided quick transportation to base hospitals. Some men were in Guam less than six hours after they were hit. If we saved some bombers, that was good, but it was the ambulance planes that we cheered.

A large part of the island was now secure, but the front was still ugly, murderous, unyielding. A heavy assault with fresh troops at the point advanced several hundred yards. As the last reports came in, I sat with General Erskine in his tent. His helmet was well back on his head, his eyes sharp and piercing as he checked his map. The corps telephone rang. It was Gen. Holland Smith. Erskine grinned widely as warm compliments poured into his ear. He put his helmet on the table and wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"Thank you, General," he said. "We all appreciate it, but you know it's the boys who did it. All I'm doing is sitting here being proud of them."



*Great Orders*

Maj. Robert Mansfield, division adjutant, stuck his head in our dug-out. "Karl," he said, "get your gear. I have orders to send you to Washington."

He handed me the papers and left. The commanding general, Fifth Amphibious Corps, had "contemplated" this, I suddenly remembered. It was in that letter Colonel Turton showed me in Guam. I said then that I didn't want to go, that it wasn't necessary, that there was urgent work here. It was all true, but this was different. This was my ticket home, all expenses paid, unasked for but so welcome. And here was the perfect way to get our movie film safely to the States.

Major Mansfield was halfway down the hill when he turned. "There's a plane in two hours. Be on it, you lucky bastard."

Corporal Tom Burgess was not easily ruffled. With Raddatz gone and Franklin out of action, Burgess was senior man at headquarters. When I told him he would have to take over, he said, "Yes, sir," and that was that.

I threw some things into my pack, washed up as best I could, and said a quick good-bye to the colonel. I didn't dare tell anyone else. It was too unfair. But the colonel knew how I felt, and he had to know anyway.

"Good luck, boy," he said. "I just wish it were me."

Boarding that medical evacuation plane was one of the hardest things I ever did. Here I was, hearty, without a scratch. What right had I to be there? I hesitated a moment. A burly corpsman reached down and grabbed my elbow.

"Take it easy, Captain," he said, mistaking me for walking wounded. "Three steps and you're on the magic carpet off this rock."

He fairly hoisted me aboard, and I dropped into a corner, trying, I'm afraid, to fake a limp. I was the last. The door closed. The floor and racks were filled with men on litters, men in bloody bandages and dirty uniforms, bearded, red-eyed men staring at the ceiling. Some clenched their teeth to keep from screaming as they were moved. A doctor walked back from the front, checking lashings, giving assurances. Corpsmen stood by two men with bottles of blood.

"Men," said the doctor, "it's three hours to Guam. I know it's rough on you, but we'll make you as comfortable as we can. If you need anything, sound off."

The engines roared, we lifted from the rocky runway, and Iwo dropped away below us. We were out of hell.

Guam was bright, green, and quiet. I had become so used to the roar of guns that I noticed first the stillness. We stepped into a world of dazzling sun, clean uniforms, crisp shirts, and white caps. I say we stepped. I stepped, and several others did, but most were carried down the ramp. Already the cure had begun. Wide smiles showed behind those beards.

At Corps Photo Center, where our still pictures were processed, Lieutenant Driscoll and the men greeted me as a hero: "God, Captain, what great stuff! You guys deserve a medal."

All the material had arrived safely, been processed, and been forwarded to Washington. I saw about fifty prints. They were indeed exceptional. Driscoll was especially pleased with our ID strips in the cameras. "That's great, Captain. Why can't the other outfits do that? This way it says right on the negative that it's Third Division. We love that."

Camp was almost deserted. At my tent everything was as I had left it. After a hot shower, cold Cokes at the club, and a hearty supper, I was reborn. The evening was spent answering the questions of those who had stayed behind. There was stillness, too, and my first good sleep in a month. By the next morning Island Command had endorsed my orders with #2 air priority. That meant *now*. My plane left at 1230.

It was a long flight to Pearl Harbor, with only one stop, Eniwetok. Some wounded were aboard, but most of the passengers were officers on urgent business. I sat in a corner with all of our combat movie

footage in a box under my feet. It was priceless. Raddatz had died and Galloway and Franklin were wounded in its production. I had big plans for that footage, but at the moment I could only sit and wait. I turned in my bucket seat and looked out on that endless ocean flecked with clouds. At sunset the water was bronze, and thunderheads crouched along the horizon. After dark, lightning played about them, and the moon cast long glints of silver on the water. Always there was the drone of the engines, the steady vibration of everything around me, and the whistle of air around the poorly fitting door.

We dozed, read, and talked some, but most of the time we just sat, each man in his own private world. I wondered how long the fighting would continue on Iwo. What were my men doing back there, where I should be?

One officer had taken sleeping pills. When we stopped at Eniwetok, he propped open his eyes, climbed down from a mountain of baggage, and lurched off the plane to the shade of a palm tree. There he curled up and fell asleep again. Then it was back to the plane, and off we went, twenty hours in all, to Oahu and John Rogers Airfield. We had gained a day crossing the dateline, so it was 1530 of the same day that we left Guam.

My friend Sam was not impressed with my unexpected arrival. We spent three days together while my precious film, all 16mm Kodachrome, was processed at Kodak Hawaii. On 16 March I projected some of it, then was off with it to Washington.

San Francisco was still in brownout, but nothing had ever looked as good to me as did the Golden Gate Bridge. I called home. Our family used the phone a lot. A long-distance call in itself would be no cause for alarm, but, with the battle still raging and casualties mounting, Mother and Dad must have dreaded any ringing of the phone. I waded right in with my most self-possessed manner. I don't remember a word of what we said, or even how I felt. Only afterward did I realize I was trembling.

My air trip to Washington was perhaps my most dangerous escapade of the war. In an old C-47, I hedgehopped from San Francisco to Washington, with long detours, unscheduled stops, and bad weather all the way. The only other passenger was Robert Sherwood, the dramatist, who sat bundled in a coat and never said a word. The

cabin attendant said that he was transfixed with fright. We were buffeted by gales, clouds blinded us all the way, and at each stop we were drenched by pelting rain. Finally, after somehow spending twenty-four hours en route, we arrived in Washington. As I walked through the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel, I saw headlines announcing that Iwo Jima was secured.

At Headquarters Marine Corps I found several old friends, most of them in senior positions. As one of the first back from Iwo, I was a major curiosity. The battle was bad enough, but our pictures and the news reports made it even worse. The fact that I had been there only days before, had lived through it, and was not even wounded was hard for anyone to believe. It was hard for me to believe, too, yet there I was, alive and whole.

The Secretary of the Navy's office, to which I had been temporarily assigned, didn't have the foggiest idea what to do with me. I had work to do everywhere except in Washington. Our film for public release was being edited in California. Our film on pallet loading should be completed in New York. I had been asked to check on some equipment at Kodak in Rochester, and there was business with the Photo Section at Camp Pendleton. The Navy clerk read and re-read my orders, held a whispered conversation with an officer in personnel, and finally looked up.

"Captain," he said, "Marine Corps is really the place to get your orders. We can't do anything here, not right now, anyway. You have basket leave until Tuesday. By then we'll have this straightened out."

That meant five days of unofficial vacation. The train brought me to Rochester the next morning. I spent several wonderful do-nothing days at home, remarkably free of emotion. By Tuesday I was back in Washington and, on a dark, rainy night, settled down to call the families of all the men in the section. If I had had time—and had thought of it—I would have brought some records with me, phone numbers and addresses. As it was, I had only my memory. I told the long-distance operator my problem, and she set out to reach each one, nineteen in all. Often, she was tracing two or three families at once. I got through to home after home. My first words were, "Everything is fine. I left ——— just a few days ago."

After that, there was usually a choked "Thank God" or a long,

awkward silence at the other end. I had little to say, really, but I could give a warm, personal word direct from hell, so to speak. Some of the families had no phone. The Galloways had to come several blocks to a relative's house. Some were terrified by a call from Washington. One woman flatly refused to answer. If I gave some people anxious, anguished moments, I brought happiness too. The operator got into the spirit of things as the evening progressed, and toward the end we were friends. The bill was absurdly small.

Headquarters Marine Corps had my orders. The Marine gunner in charge of the detail branch was eager to help. "Captain," he said, "we have a paragraph we use once in a while that is just right for you. How do you like it?"

He handed me my orders, the most amazing set I had ever seen. They read in part as follows:

1. Basic orders are so far modified that you will proceed to the following-named places, in the order deemed most expedient, on temporary duty in connection with matters pertaining to the motion picture "Two Jima":

Fort Lee, New Jersey (Consolidated Film Industries)  
Rochester, New York (Eastman Kodak Company)  
Washington, D.C.  
Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California  
Burbank, California (Warner Brothers Studios)

2. You are authorized to omit or revisit any of the above-named places.

3. On completion of this temporary duty you will proceed to San Francisco, California, and report to the Commanding General, Department of the Pacific, Marine Corps, for further transportation by air to your regular station and duties, via Headquarters, Pacific Ocean Areas. [Pearl Harbor].

4. You are directed to perform the travel involved via Government and/or commercial aircraft where necessary to expedite completion of this travel. Class III priority transportation for travel within the continental limits of the

United States, Class II priority air transportation for travel by air abroad, and an excess baggage allowance of 60 pounds consisting of photographic material, are hereby certified as necessary in execution of these orders.

5. The travel herein enjoined is necessary in the public service.

6. While absent from your station, you will be allowed a per diem of \$7 in lieu of subsistence, in addition to the actual cost of transportation to the government.

A. A. Vandegrift

The gunner had a wide grin as I finished reading. "Will that cover things, Captain?" he asked. "That paragraph two is a dilly, isn't it?"

"Yes, Gunner," I replied, "it sure is. It should do nicely."

Nicely, indeed! I could travel on those orders all over the country, at per diem expenses plus transportation, until the war was over. It was a dream setup, but I couldn't, wouldn't take advantage of it. It did, however, remind me of a service joke: Like all travel orders, these included the phrase "the travel herein enjoined is necessary in the public service." The story goes that a clerk new to the service was assigned to type travel orders. He had been at it for weeks before someone discovered that his closing phrase was "the travel herein *enjoyed* is necessary in the public service." I would enjoy these orders.

New York was first. I spent several days in Fort Lee, across the river in New Jersey, completing our film on pallet loading. In a week of cold rain and dark skies, I had long sessions of editing and sound recording. One night, as I stepped into the street, I felt an air of tenseness and uneasiness. Was it the rain or the darkness? No, it was more than that. At the corner I saw a newspaper, limp in the rain, with a large black headline: "FDR DIES."

I had never liked Roosevelt, but the news hit hard. It created an emptiness that Americans had not known since the death of Lincoln. Our leader, "that man," whatever you called him, whatever you thought of him, had been—with Churchill—the personification of

the war. Now he was gone. I walked slowly in the rain, a tear mingling with the raindrops on my face.

At Warner Brothers Studio in Burbank, California, Captain Milton Sperling and two photo officers, 1st Lt. Herbert Schlosberg and Warrant Officer Norman Hatch, from Iwo Jima were delighted to see me. Our public release film, *Shores of Iwo Jima*, was in a rough cut. They rushed me into a projection room, where Jack Warner joined us. The picture was big, colorful, noisy, grim, bloody. When it was over, the fellows turned to me expectantly.

“Well?” said Sperling.

“Well,” I began, “I’ve seen it only once, but——”

Sperling cut me short. “That’s the whole point, Karl,” he said. “You’ve seen it only once. That’s the way the audience sees it. We’ve been living with it for ten days. We can’t judge it anymore.”

He sat back and listened while I gave him my impressions and a few suggestions. Jack Warner nodded assent. They took a few of my ideas and included some of our latest footage. The picture was released in the theaters to great acclaim and, later, was nominated for an Academy Award.

A few days later I was in San Francisco, headed back to Guam. My air priority rated me a seat as far as Honolulu on the *Clipper*, Pan American’s flying boat, the biggest thing in the sky. At 1900 on 22 April, we left the ramp at Treasure Island and lumbered with tremendous noise down a long, buoy-marked lane. Near Alcatraz we turned and halted. The engines roared, lashing the water, sending clouds of spray past the portholes. With full power, the plane began to move. The wall of water and spray subsided as the hull lifted until we were just skimming the surface. Finally we took off, up into the night.

That flying boat had more room per passenger than do the big jets of today. Compartments for four provided small-group privacy. A steward spread our table with a white cloth for cocktails, dinner, liqueur, and cigars. When that was over and conversation died, each of us retired to his private Pullman-style berth, wriggled into nightclothes, and slept soundly until morning. Soon after breakfast we saw the mountains of Oahu and, minutes later, glided down onto the bay at John Rogers Field in Honolulu. We had been in the air for sixteen hours. One-way fare: \$278.

Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force, was jammed with visiting officers, but I knew my way around and in no time was set to move on. A small group of us had dinner at P.Y. Chong's, famed for the best steaks west of San Francisco. Located in a nondescript wooden building halfway between Pearl Harbor and Honolulu, it was easy to find. Cars turned in there continually, and the parking lot was always full. Mr. Chong had either a private ranch or good access to the black market. We never found out which, and we didn't ask. We just enjoyed the large, thick, tender steaks.

The next day I was off for Guam. I carried a print of all the movie film that we had shot on Iwo Jima, ready for editing. My Navy R5D plane (DC-4) was a big letdown from the *Clipper*, but it was faster. We went straight through to Guam with only one stop, at Eniwetok. The morning of 30 April I was back at the division.

It was still early when I walked into my tent. My gear was just as I had left it. The view was still the same. The palms were green and limp. Suddenly I was limp too. "You chump," I said to myself, "you goddamn chump! You had orders that you could have traveled on 'til the war was over, but oh, no; you had to come back. You stupid, ignorant . . ."

It was just a flash. My head cleared, and I unpacked. Philpott came in as I finished.

"Oh, damn," he cried. "You just cost me ten bucks! I bet you'd never come back. I thought you knew all those big wheels back there, Karl. You mean to tell me you couldn't get some Stateside duty?"

He wouldn't have appreciated my great orders or the fact that I would soon be going back to Pearl, so I muttered something about being sorry to disappoint him. At that moment I *was* a little sorry.

During the next four weeks, I reorganized the section and edited our film report of the division's part on Iwo Jima. Morrie Abrams, my mentor from Quantico, worked with me. We locked ourselves in a storage room and stayed there until the job was done. I had a rough cut, but something was wrong with it. Morrie took one look and grinned.

"It's OK, Captain, no problem. It's just twice as long as it ought to be."

"Morrie," I cried, "I can't cut a foot!"

"Yes, you can. Let me show you."



We hunched over the viewer and went through the film frame by frame. The scenes were fine, but most needed snips here and there, and a few had to come out. After eight hours, we had filled two wastebaskets, and the floor was strewn with pieces. The picture was transformed. All the good stuff was there, but now it burst with interest and energy, exploded in close-ups. The color was great. A showing for the general and staff brought down the house. I was a hero, but, of course, the men had done the work. Franklin, Handley, Raddatz, and VanDerveer were the true heroes. Over the next two weeks we showed the film for every unit in the division and at Island Command. It was a triumph and eventually was nominated for an academy award.

To top it off, the Photo Section received an official commendation from the Secretary of the Navy. It said, in part, "All photographers in the unit demonstrated outstanding skill, devotion to duty, courage, and initiative in coverage of the action." It went on to name Franklin, Handley, Raddatz, VanDerveer, and me. Sadly, it didn't mention any of the still photographers. Batts, Burgess, Heiburger, and McClure, with all the others, had done great work, too.

On 30 May Lt. Clay Puckett arrived to relieve me. Clay was from Texas. Tall, lean, hard, and quiet, he had a quick smile. When he didn't know something, he said so. When he did know, which was most of the time, he moved fast. By 4 June he was on his own, and I flew back to Pearl Harbor. Handley and VanDerveer would follow shortly.

I left the Third Division with no regret. We did a good job, even had that letter of commendation to prove it. But I had always been an outsider, one who had not shared the bitter days of Bougainville or the hard, hectic heat of the Guam campaign. I had come when all that was over and the division was exhausted. I was one of those who had to push and needle and prod. I never really belonged.

Guadalcanal was different. We had gone together into something that none of us knew anything about. We were alone on that island for four desperate months. We took all the Japanese could throw at us, we stuck it out, and we won. The First Division was the real thing for me. Nothing else could ever be the same.

Now I was off to Pearl Harbor, Headquarters, Fleet Marine Force Pacific (FMFPAC). That job rated an office and a jeep. It also rated

the rank of lieutenant colonel, but there was no sign of that. I was to organize the flying photo teams, train and equip them, and be ready for the “Big One,” Japan itself.

## *War's End at Pearl Harbor*

Everyone in the Pacific dreamed of duty at Pearl Harbor: Honolulu, Waikiki, women, whiskey, no bombs, no bugs, a laundry, ice, sheets, even some air-conditioning. Work was done on paper, and nights were for liberty.

My office was Quonset hut 12, the last of a long row on the parade ground of the Marine barracks. The building was hot during the day, noisy as a subway when it rained, and the whole place shook when anyone walked across the floor. Its one redeeming feature was its proximity to the pool. Our projection room became a dressing room. All day, it was littered with shirts, pants, and shoes, while their owners took quick dips. Most of the men had come from months in battle areas and needed relaxation. As long as work was done on time, I looked the other way.

Routine at Pearl was easy to take. At the Navy BOQ, I was up at 0700 and, at 0715, drove with Maj. Bob Beche to the officers' club. Sitting around the outdoor pool for juice, sweet rolls, and coffee, we often settled a couple of matters before going to the office.

I spent the day reading dispatches, writing memos, and conferring with people down the line. Dispatches governed our lives. Each morning, late, because we were at the end of the line, an MP came in with the dispatch board. There might be two dozen messages, most of them confidential or secret. Each was marked for action or information, with a place for the initials of each staff officer. I was expected to know about each dispatch and to take whatever action was required. Many messages were cryptic: "Your 0815071945 affirmative." That meant "your message of 0815 on 7 July 1945 is approved." Others went on for pages. I read all of them while the MP waited.

Staff officers knew precisely what was going on, provided, of course, that they knew what 0815071945 was all about. We had to know that, too.

I was responsible for all things photographic, with the three-star authority of Gen. Holland M. (Howlin' Mad) Smith, Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific (FMFPAC). I established policies, but getting them implemented required constant trips to other staff sections. Some things came easily, with "Do it" or "I concur." Others evolved only after long discussions. My job was to make other staff officers think that my ideas were really theirs. Then approval came easily.

I was also commanding officer, Photographic Company, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, with fourteen officers and 164 men, most of them scattered around the Pacific. The company was based at Camp Catlin, outside the Navy Yard. I spent part of each day there, with lunch at the officers' club. The club didn't look like much, just two barracks with a paved, covered court between them, but its reputation echoed throughout the Pacific. The largest array of slot machines west of Las Vegas was in constant use. Proceeds from their operation subsidized a series of parties where free liquor flowed in legendary volume, the undoing of more than one participant. A fringe benefit was a salad-and-sandwich buffet later said to have been the inspiration for the Sunday buffet at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel.

In the evening my friend Sam Meyer and I usually had dinner together. Navy chow was too plentiful and too hearty, but it was handy and cheap, so we ate at the BOQ, then went to an outdoor movie. The picture was usually bad, and often there was rain before it ended, but it was free, and there was a different one every night. At the CINCPAC (Commander in Chief, Pacific) theater in Makalapa, Admiral Nimitz and his senior staff attended one night in especially heavy rain. Nimitz pulled his cap down over his ears and sat there until the end. Nobody with him dared to leave, so the whole audience stayed, soaked clear through but showing our support. Such was the routine at Pearl. It was easy, but we had a lot of work, too. The invasion of Japan was coming, and time was running out.

After being so long in forward areas, where Pearl was a remote world at the other end of a dispatch, I found it hard to adjust to being

there. The atmosphere was deceiving: no drama or excitement, no rush or bustle. Things moved in an orderly but sometimes maddening way. I did a lot of waiting, a lot of persuading, and no small amount of cussing. I hammered out an SOP (Standing Operating Procedure) and began to pull my teams together. I battled the quartermaster for gear, and talked the Navy into giving us identification cards from Nimitz's office. In two weeks, I did things that I had dreamed of for two years. Decisions reached out to every photographic unit and, sometimes, to individuals.

What happened to Sgt. Hy Peskin was a brutal example. He was one of the best photographers in the Corps. He had been everywhere and photographed everybody, but he rubbed officers the wrong way. All the time! He had been on deck only an hour when I had a call from Col. W.C. James, G-1, Personnel.

"Soule," he said, "you have a Sergeant Peskin, just reported in."

"Yes, sir. Just this morning."

"Well, get him out of here. I don't want him around."

"He's just in from forward areas, Colonel. He needs some rest. Do you have any suggestions?"

"That's your problem, Captain. Just get him out of here, anywhere, but not here. If you don't ship him out, I will."

I was shocked but managed a quiet "yes, sir" and hung up. Peskin needed some rest. Maybe I could send him someplace on the other side of the island, maybe even back to the mainland. That would take some doing. I fished around for possibilities but didn't move fast enough. In two days, he was gone, to a defense battalion in Palau, of all places!

Scores of men were coming in on rotation from forward units. They were of no use the first few days. They lay in the sun, swam in the pool, guzzled milk shakes at the PX, and were out on the town all night. After a few days, they snapped out of it, ready for work. My job, both at the company and at staff, was to mold them, with some new men, into crack teams of photographers ready for combat on an hour's notice. It was Quantico all over again, but now we were five thousand miles closer to the war, knew each other, and had been tested in battle.



In July 1945, Captain Soule received the Bronze Star for his work on Iwo Jima. USMC photo.

My first step was to take the whole crew to the rifle range at Puuloa. It was like going to another island. We took the ferry across the harbor entrance and on to the range itself, which was cut off from other installations. The barracks were old but comfortable, and the chow was good. Even those of us who had been in combat had done little or no firing. We needed practice as much as those who had just arrived. For five glorious days, I forgot about memos, orders, and dispatches. We fired our weapons all morning and lay in the sun all afternoon. Evenings were filled with discussions, everyone taking part, from me down to the most recently arrived private. When we got back to Pearl, we were an outfit, not a polished or ready one, but a team.

At Camp Catlin, we had an award ceremony. That letter of commendation from the Secretary of the Navy had circulated through channels. Franklin, Handley, Raddatz (posthumously), and

VanDerveer got commendation ribbons. I received the Bronze Star, with V for valor in combat. That, I thought, was stretching it a bit.

All over the Pacific, the big operation was beginning to roll. Our stockroom, run by Warrant Officer Howard Schultz, was filled to overflowing with equipment and supplies. For once, we would have all we needed of everything. Pearl Harbor was on a seven-day week, but we did pause long enough on the Fourth of July for a special dinner at the BOQ, with a printed menu:

Hawaiian Fruit Cup  
Cream of Tomato Soup   Soda Wafers  
Green Onions   Red Radishes   Celery  
Ripe Olives   Green Olives  
**ROAST CHICKEN WITH SAGE DRESSING**  
Giblet Gravy   Cranberry Sauce  
Snow Flake Potatoes  
New Green Peas   Fresh Carrots  
Lettuce and Tomato Salad  
Old Fashioned French Dressing  
Hot Parker House Rolls  
Bread   Butter  
Fruit Medley   Ice Cream Sundae  
Assorted Cookies  
Coffee   Grape   Punch  
Cigars   Candy   Cigarettes

The rifle range was a good start to our training, but we needed much more, especially the new men. The Army had a combat school that might do the trick, but I wanted to be sure. The only way to do that was to take the course myself. I swore the school director to secrecy and got orders for four of us to take the course as privates. Herb Reed and I put away our bars, Handley and VanDerveer got some dungarees with no chevrons, and we set out for two weeks of Army life.

Today, the windward side of Oahu is only twenty minutes from Pearl by the tunnel, but in 1945 it was a long, slow trip through town, up over Nuuanu Pali, and down the narrow, winding road on the other

side. The school was at Punaluu, a remote area far from the main road, up against the mountains. Word had gone out that four Marines were to join the class. When we arrived, we drove between two lines of troops to our own pyramidal tent. There was room beside it for the jeep, an appurtenance which in itself aroused great curiosity and comment.

The camp was a mess. The four of us policed our area until it gleamed. We swabbed our tent deck, tight-rolled the flaps, swept the ground around it, and polished and rubbed until everything sparkled. One by one, the little knots of spectators broke up. Work parties turned to all along the company street. The Army would not be outdone by Marines! Before long the whole camp was shipshape, if the Army could pardon the term.

Our class was made up almost entirely of a replacement draft from the mainland. None of the men had been overseas. Nearly all were in their teens, scared stiff of what lay ahead, and perplexed by our presence. Why did Marines have to go to school, especially after they had been in combat—Iwo Jima, of all places? What was combat like? For an hour we answered questions, and submitted to an examination of ourselves and our equipment. They were surprised that our rifles and other gear were the same as theirs. They thought that Marines were special. We did nothing to disillusion them.

The Army men couldn't control their curiosity. They stood in little groups around our tent, watching us from a respectful distance. Many, with only sketchy knowledge of their weapons, came to us for help. One man didn't even know how to strip his rifle. Not daring to confess to his sergeant, he asked us for a quick course. Herb finally put up a sign that read "USMC ARMORY."

For me, that course was, in some ways, the most interesting of the war. It was my only experience as an enlisted man. We kept our secret, learned a lot, and enjoyed ourselves immensely. Lectures covered survival in the jungle: where to look for water, how to conceal our tracks, the safest places to sleep, and what fruits and vegetables were safe to eat. At the end of his remarks on one fruit, the instructor held up a sample for us to see and said, "Very, very tasty. What is it, class?"

"A mountain apple, and very, very tasty" was our reply.



In combat firing, we were the wonders of the camp. We hit everything that we shot at. Of course we didn't tell anyone that we had just come from a week on the rifle range. In the end, it came down to a duel between a soldier and Van, shooting at balloons with M-1 rifles. With our rigorous Marine Corps safety background, Herb and I were appalled. Firing an M-1 into the air was serious business. It could kill somebody five hundred yards away.

"Should I say something, Herb?" I asked. "After all, I'm senior to everyone around here. Is it in some way my responsibility?"

"Relax, Private Soule," said Herb. "You're just an Army recruit. Forget it. Just don't shoot yourself in the foot. Then you'd be in real trouble."

Now there was only one balloon left per man. (Actually, it was an inflated condom.) The soldier missed his. All eyes turned to Van. He looked over his shoulder at me.

"Van," I said, "if you miss this one you're going to *really* be a private!"

He didn't miss. The honor of the Corps was upheld.

In the second week, we Marines were asked to demonstrate how to assault a fortified position. I didn't know anything about that sort of thing, so I told Herb to take charge and run it as a corporal would. We circled through the brush on the right. Handley, under our covering fire, crawled up and threw a satchel charge into the opening. It went off with a tremendous bang. Fire and smoke poured from the opening. It was a sensation! We accepted the applause of the whole class.

So it went. On every compass course, we came in first. We couldn't make a mistake. We hiked, we shot, we wrestled, we listened to lectures. We asked tough questions that the instructors couldn't answer. But our secret was out. Somehow, they learned that at least one, perhaps two of us were officers, the others NCOs. We denied it or at least avoided giving a direct answer and got by until the next-to-the-last day. In the shower that afternoon, a voice behind me, in a very offhand way, said, "Say, Captain . . ."

I turned instinctively. "Yes," I said.

A roar went up. The man pointed a long finger at me and shouted, "See! I told you!"

The jig was up. We had to tell the whole story, but by then they had come to know us. We were accepted.

At the end of the course, we piled our gear into the jeep, put our bars back on, and drove back to Pearl. I had found my school. Now to get the men there without delay. That was not to be. The war was nearly over.

At the BOQ, I shared a room with three other officers. We had two sets of upper and lower bunks, with showers just down the hall. Perched precariously on our window sill was a small radio in a black plastic case. It had fallen to the floor several times, but it still worked in a raspy, broken way, and played constantly when anyone was in the room. On 1 August, we happened to be listening when Walter Winchell made a remarkable broadcast that I have never heard mentioned anywhere, though its significance was soon apparent. From that raspy speaker, Winchell spoke in even harsher tones than usual, but no one moved to change the station. It was just chatter in the background. Then we heard it, loud and clear. Winchell was saying that the war would be over in three days! We stared at each other.

"Did you hear what I heard?" Fred asked.

"Oh, that jerk," said Bill. "For Christ's sake, what a bunch of crap."

We hooted in derision and turned to other matters.

The fellows next door had a radio, too, that signed on every morning at 0700 with the news. It woke us up, but we didn't complain. It was time to get up anyway, and it was better than an alarm clock. The morning of 6 August, I came to slowly as the news began. It was muffled by the wall, but we could understand every word as long as we lay still. The first item brought us up short. The United States had dropped on Japan a bomb with an explosive force equal to twenty thousand tons of TNT! We gasped and held our breath. After a few seconds of silence, the voice went on: "You heard correctly—twenty-thousand tons of TNT!"

"My, God," said Bill. "That must be an atomic bomb, or something."

"Well," said Fred, staring at the ceiling, "Walter Winchell may have been pretty close after all."

Things were never the same after that. Radios blossomed in

every office. The black cloud that had hung over us for years had lifted a little. Maybe there would be an end to the war after all. Nobody said anything about it. Few even dared to hope.

At 0200 on 10 August, Pearl Harbor went wild. We were jolted from our sleep by rockets, sirens, searchlights, and the firing of anti-aircraft batteries. It wasn't an air raid. That never entered our heads. It could only mean the end of the war! Men were running down the hall. Fred popped out of bed and snapped on the radio. The first words were, "We repeat, this has not been confirmed."

Bedlam burst in the corridor, but only from the new fellows. Wild with joy, they were jumping and shouting, pummeling each other. The older fellows—that was us—listened a few minutes to the radio. We heard again and again that it was not official.

In the hall, Commander Johnson shouted for order: "All right, you yardbirds, back to bed! The war's not over yet."

The tumult died, the firing outside stopped, and there was silence again. But no one slept.

The next four days were chaos. Nothing was done. People sat by radios, talked, and waited. It was now official that an offer had been made. Much as we wanted to hope, we dared not. Then, on 14 August, the word came. It was over!

People will talk about that day in Honolulu for a hundred years. The whole town was a mass of cheering, deliriously happy humanity. Pearl Harbor fell apart. Nobody was in his office. Everyone was at least a little high, and some were in the clouds. The next day, people began to drift back to their desks. We started the most frantic, most complete dismantling of armed forces in history. Night work stopped immediately. We were unofficially—but definitely—on an 0800 to 1700 day.

Major Beche took a combat camera crew by air to Japan. I was stuck in Pearl, in command of the company and in charge of the staff job. Now I had two jeeps, one for each job. I released one to Sgt. Bob Nye for use by staff NCOs of the company, but I kept the other for myself. It had come late, but I would make the most of it while it lasted.

On 3 September, *Missouri* entered Tokyo Bay, and the surrender was signed. The war was over. At CINCPAC, an admiral was

heard to remark with some heat, "Oh, damn, just as we got things running right!"

Even with a reduced roster, it was hard to keep the men busy. For the first time, I had disciplinary problems. The old-timers were steady and true, but the late arrivals were uncontrollable. Could the release from something that they didn't know be sweeter than the old-timers' escape from something they knew too well? Maybe the old-timers just didn't believe it. "I'll believe it when I see the Golden Gate," said one. He spoke for many.

Things were moving fast, but not fast enough for the newcomers. They wanted out, now! They wrote letters home demanding action. Within days, a point system for returning home was announced. I had far more points than I needed, but was stuck with a mountain of work and no one who could do it for me. I sent in a memo anyway, but Colonel James stopped it. I took some consolation from his scrawled comment: "No competent relief. Request denied."

I found time to play records at Catlin after lunch; all Beethoven, loud enough to rattle the windows. I spent hours drawing plans for a house. There was a horizon again. The dark cloud was gone. The long, cold night was over. The sun was bright and warm.

Two days after the surrender, I received orders to disband the Photographic Company. The next day, I got word that seventeen men were coming out to join us. I stopped that, but managed to hold onto a large promotion list and moved nearly everyone up one grade. We went through the company papers, turned in the essential records, and burned the rest. We rated everyone on his discharge points. On 10 September, the first group left for home.

Cameras and film were now priceless civilian items, about the only military stores that were. I doubled the guard at our warehouse, but not quickly enough. Already some things had disappeared. I doubled the guard again, and this time caught two men red-handed. They returned the gear, and we forgot about it. The war was over.

A few days later, we turned over all our equipment to the quartermaster, and with it my major concern, over half a million dollars' worth of cameras, film, and accessories. On 26 September, three weeks

after the surrender, the Photographic Company was disbanded. I was free of that job but managed to keep the jeep.

On 27 October, the major and his crew returned from Japan, full of tall stories, loaded with souvenirs, and burning to get home. By now, I had the skids well greased. Within hours some of the men were on their way.

Herb Reed led a photo team to Nagasaki for pictures of the atomic damage there. For the next thirty days they were in and out of ground zero, wearing film badges to detect radiation. When those were developed, they were totally black, showing that all of the men had received large doses of radiation. None of them suffered any ill effects, then or in the decades that followed.

When he returned to Pearl, Herb reported, "The men were superbly trained. They knew what they were doing—far better than I—so almost without exception I let them roam freely, especially Wolfkill. What a keen man, and, yes, trouble."

Wolfkill, maverick to the end, managed to miss the boat home! He was in the Transient Company, awaiting transportation. No one was to leave the area. No ship left for home without a last-minute check to be sure that every bunk and hammock was occupied. If not, they pulled people out of camp, sometimes late at night. One night, Wolfkill decided that nothing more would happen, and he went into Honolulu. When he came back at 0600, the tent was empty. Everyone was aboard ship. He got out of that with a deck court martial, which delayed his getting home for three weeks. He almost missed the boat that time, too, and for the same reason, AWOL. That time, however, friends packed his seabag and covered for him while he sneaked under the fence and took his place in ranks. As he said to me, in 1998, "After the war was over, I didn't take the Marine Corps as seriously as I should have."

We had a farewell party at P.Y. Chong's. There is photographic evidence that I was carried out, though under precisely what circumstances I don't recall. Anyway, in the course of the proceedings, I was given a large Japanese battle flag straight from the flag locker of battleship *Haruna*, one of the two that bombarded us that terrible night on Guadalcanal. That flag is now in the Marine Corps Museum.



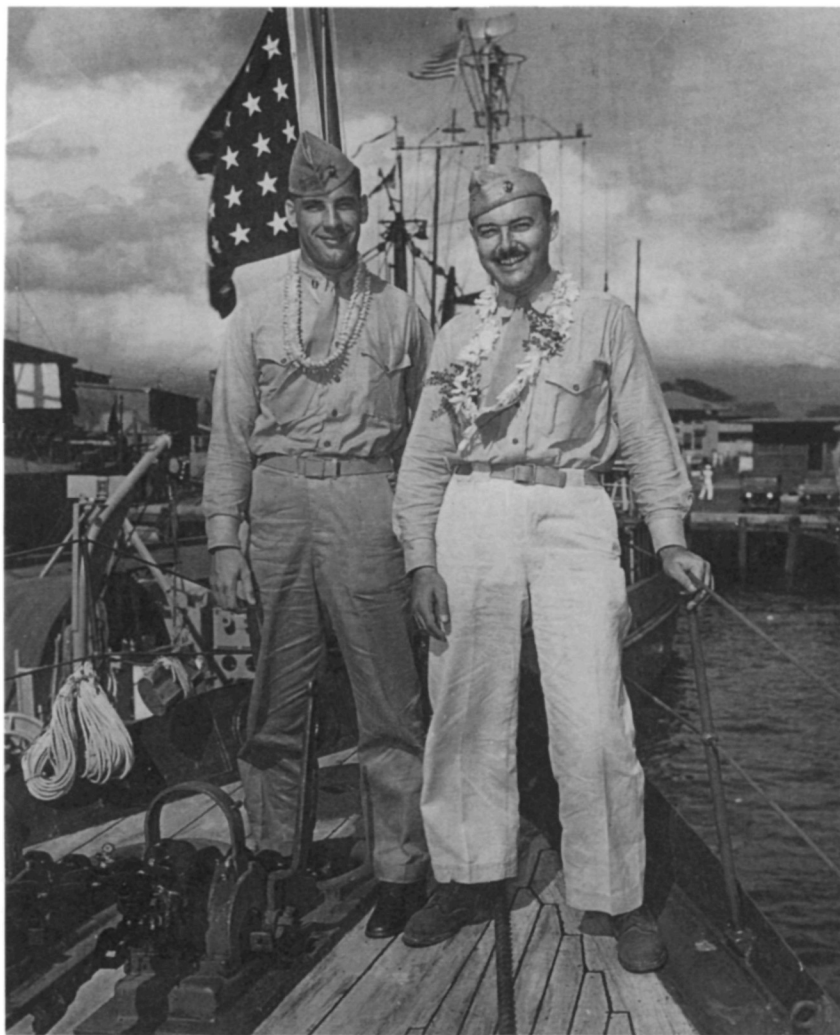
Just why Captain Soule had to be carried away from his farewell party at P.Y. Chong's is a matter of contention. USMC photo, unofficial.

On 3 November, Major Beche and I got orders for transportation home on PYC 765. It must have been the smallest ship in the fleet. A boat is what it was, with a crew of only six. Two bunks were free, and we got them. We went down to see the boat, had our picture taken with leis around our necks, and were all set.

Bob had misgivings: "Can you see going to San Diego on this thing? It's too small even to go out of the harbor."

I felt the same way. I doubted I could survive ten days on board, especially in rough seas. "OK," I said, "I'm sure I can work out something."

I called Gunner Banta in personnel. "Gunner," I said, "we've



Major Robert Beche (right) and Captain Soule thought PYC 765 too small to cross the Pacific safely. Pulling a few strings landed them berths on a battleship instead. USMC photo.

known each other for years. I never asked a favor, but, boy, I need one now.”

“What’s the problem? What can I do for you?”

I explained the situation. “I really don’t think I’d survive the trip on that boat.”

“Well, we can’t have that. We certainly don’t want to lose you after all these years. Let me see what I can do.”

An hour later, he called back. “Is a battleship big enough?”

“Gunner, that would be perfect.”

“You’ll have to wait a couple of days. I assume that’s not a problem.”

“Hell, no. This is great, Gunner. Thanks a million.”

“OK. Glad to help. Send me a photo when you get home. I’ve forgotten what the States look like.”

On 5 November, I left Herb Reed to hold down the photo desk. Bob Beche and I boarded battleship *Colorado*, an old ship of the line. I shared a big cabin with the radar officer. The trip to San Diego took eight days, four of them in forty-knot winds. The decks were awash most of the time, so we couldn’t go out. One monstrous wave crashed over the bow, tore a 20mm gun from its mount, and drove the barrel through the deck. Through all of it, the ship plowed majestically on.

On the fourth day, we caught up with the flotilla of PYC boats. The sea was so rough that they couldn’t get a good navigational fix. *Colorado* gave them their exact position.

“Gosh,” said Bob, “I’m sure glad we aren’t on those. We would have died for sure—no medals or anything, just killed in action.”

We came into San Diego in a dense fog. Standing on the bridge, I watched the radar picture of the harbor. Without slowing, we passed Point Loma and Shelter Island. The dock loomed out of the fog at the last minute. As the first lines were thrown over the side, a surging roar of joy welled up from the ship and thundered against the pier. A band broke into “Anchors Aweigh,” then “California, Here I Come.” The ship was white with uniforms, the pier bright in all the color of California. A grizzled bos’n’s mate stood beside me, tears streaming down his cheeks. “Now,” he sobbed, “now I believe it.”



## *Glossary*

*APA:* attack troop transport ship  
*AWOL:* absent without official leave  
*BC Scope:* binocular periscope with compass ring  
*B-17:* large four-engine bomber; “Flying Fortress”  
*B-29:* long-range four-engine bomber; “Superfortress”  
*BAR:* Browning automatic rifle  
*BOQ:* bachelor officers quarters  
*C-47:* Navy designation of D-3 two-engine commercial transport  
*CACTUS:* code name for Guadalcanal  
*CINCPAC:* Commander in Chief, Pacific  
*COMAIRSOPAC:* Commander for Air, South Pacific  
*COMSOPAC:* Commander, South Pacific  
*CP:* command post  
*CPO:* naval chief petty officer  
*D-2:* division intelligence section, or staff officer (later G-2)  
*D-Day:* starting day of an attack  
*DC-3:* Douglas two-engine commercial transport plane  
*Defilade:* location protected by land formation from enemy fire  
*Dogface:* enlisted man in the Army  
*DSIO:* district senior intelligence officer  
*FAGAIRTRANS:* first available Government Air Transportation  
*FAIRTRANS:* first available air transportation  
*FMFPAC:* Fleet Marine Force Pacific  
*FRAY:* code name for Guam  
*FRUPAC:* Fleet Radio Unit Pacific  
*G.I.:* Government Issue, often refers to a soldier, or his equipment  
*G-1:* general’s staff personnel section, or staff officer  
*G-2:* general’s staff intelligence section, or staff officer  
*H-Hour:* hour for start of an attack  
*HQ:* headquarters  
*I.D.:* identification

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*M-1*: standard Garand infantry rifle, beginning in late 1942  
*MARCORPS*: Marine Corps Headquarters  
*MARDIV*: Marine Division  
*MCS*: Marine Corps School  
*MP*: military police  
*NCO*: non-commissioned officer  
*OCS*: Officer Candidate School  
*OD*: officer of the day, or officer of the deck (Navy)  
*PBY*: two-engine amphibious patrol plane, "Catalina"  
*PT boat*: motor torpedo boat  
*PX*: post exchange  
*PYC*: small patrol boat  
*R5D*: Navy designation of the Douglas DC-4 transport plane  
*RAAF*: Royal Australian Air Force  
*RNZAF*: Royal New Zealand Air Force  
*ROC*: Reserve Officers Class  
*SBD*: Navy single-engine dive-bomber, usually carrier-based; two-man crew  
*Seabees*: Navy construction personnel  
*SOP*: standing operating procedure  
*SOS*: distress call  
*TBA*: Tables of Basic Allowances  
*TNT*: tri-nitro-toluene, a common military explosive  
*U-boat*: German submarine  
*USMC*: United States Marine Corps  
*USMCR*: United States Marine Corps Reserve  
*USO*: United Service Organization  
*YP boat*: small patrol craft, often a converted tuna boat

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This book is a personal memoir based on my participation in the events and on my detailed notes and journals written at the time. I completed a rough draft in 1945, which accounts for much of the intimate detail. In the years since, a vast amount of information has become available from Allied and Japanese sources. The books listed here are of great interest in themselves and are valuable for their corroboration of nearly all of my observations. Some of the later information contained in these books is included in this book, but my work remains a personal memoir and is not intended as an historical reference.

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